

# CINEFANTASTIQUE

WINTER 1973

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**Report: Trieste Festival '72.**

**INTERVIEWS: George A. Romero, Don Siegel.**

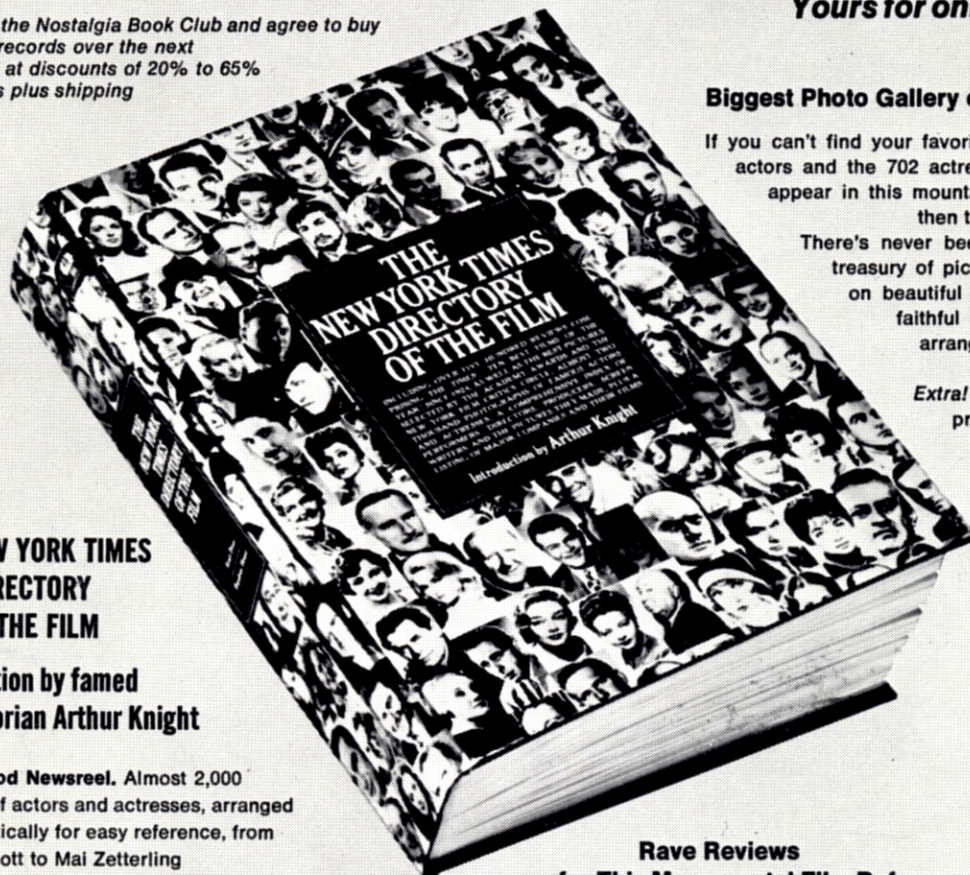


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# WINTER

# FEATURES

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AWKNOWLEDGEMENTS: ABC-TV, AIP, Allied Artists, Amicus, Alan Gadney, Columbia, NTA, PBS-TV, 20th Century Fox, Universal, Walter Reade Org.

CINEFANTASTIQUE is published and edited four times per year by Frederick S. Clarke. In May, August, November, and February. Sample copy, \$1, one year subscription (4 issues) \$4, two years subscription (8 issues) \$7, three years subscription (12 issues) \$10. Foreign subscriptions (including Canada and Mexico) are: one year \$6, two years \$10.50, three years \$15, payable by International Postal Money Order or a check drawn in U.S. funds on any American bank. Make checks and money orders payable to Frederick S. Clarke. Contributions of art, articles, photos and reviews are heartily encouraged but not paid for. A discussion, in advance, of what you have in mind will often save wasted time and effort. Contributors receive a minimum of three copies of the issue containing their work, on publication. Display advertising rates on request. For classified advertising rates see page 47. Application to mail at second class postage rates is pending at Chicago, Illinois. Contents are copyright © 1972 by Frederick S. Clarke. Address all mail, money and madness to 7470 W. Diversey, Elmwood Park, Illinois 60635.

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RETAIL DISTRIBUTION: In the United States by B. DeBoer, 188 High Street, Nutley, New Jersey 07110. In Canada by The Capital Distributing Co. (Canada) Ltd. 261 Wycroft Road, Oakville, Ontario, Canada.

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Front Cover: A fascinating scene from THE OTHER, currently in release from 20th Century Fox  
Director Robert Mulligan relaxes during a break in the location filming of THE OTHER :Back Cover

# VOLUME 2

# NUMBER 3



# DARK STAR

Two cinema students at USC prove that skilful, resourceful filmmakers can do the same things that the major studios can do, and with a lot less money.

Late in the evening, on Monday, June 5, I was treated to the viewing of the unfinished rough cut of an independently-made science fiction feature, made by two University of Southern California cinema students, John Carpenter and Dan O'Bannon. It is titled **DARK STAR: A SCIENCE FICTION ADVENTURE** and, in spite of the fact that what I saw was incomplete and crude, the potential is there for a good, class combination of science fiction, adventure, action, comedy, and satire, with some startling visual effects.

Indeed, the most amazing aspect of the forty-minute rough cut I viewed, is its professional visual look. One can hardly believe, as the stills illustrate here, that the film was made as its production and special effects designer describes it in the ensuing interview. It proves that skilful, resourceful filmmakers can do the same things that the major studios can do, with a lot less money. It's truly remarkable and encouraging to see this, and I sincerely hope that when Mr. O'Bannon and Mr. Carpenter's film is finished, it will find its way into distribution.

Though John Carpenter is producer, director, and writer of the film, my talk was with production and special effects designer and supervisor, co-writer and editor, Dan O'Bannon, who also acts in the film. My interview took place in the patio of the USC Cinema Arts building, which was about as appropriate a place as any.

The son of a carpenter, Dan O'Bannon was born in 1946, in St. Louis, Missouri. He was educated in fine arts (painting and illustration) at Washington University, with a great deal of theatre experience. He enrolled at the University of Southern California after reading about it in "Playboy" magazine, and his film education was developed there. At Washington University, he made a one hour parody of giant, radioactive monster and insect films called **THE ATTACK OF THE 50 FOOT CHICKEN**.

CFQ: What was the genesis of the whole project?

O'BANNON: It began in July of 1970, when I returned from San Jose, acting in a film, **FOSTER'S RELEASE**. John Carpenter had just returned from his home in Bowling Green, Kentucky, and he had finished making a film called **LADY MADONNA**, with which he was unsatisfied. He said to me that he would be interested in my taking an acting role in a science fiction film he was going to do in the fall. So I said not only would I be interested in acting in it, but perhaps doing some other things as well. We went over to the House of Pancakes (it's very vivid in my mind), sat down, and he explained his idea to me.

He said that there are four men in space, in a space ship, whose job it is to drop bombs on suns that are about to go super-nova. During one of the bomb runs, a bomb gets stuck in the bomb bay and won't drop, and so the captain goes outside with a crowbar to try to lever it out of the bomb bay. One of the other men goes crazy, and comes outside with a raygun, and threatens to blast it. He fires it, the bomb blows up, the two men are tossed away into space, and one of them becomes a shooting star as he goes into the earth's atmosphere and burns up. The ending was copped from Ray Bradbury's story, "Kaleidoscope." This idea has since been enlarged upon and altered in the final version.

He said the idea is the men are dirty, greasy, unshaven, and crazy because they've been out there too long without women.

The first suggestion I made immediately was making the bomb a talking bomb. They have to verbally program it, and give it the course and trajectory. What happens is that when the bomb fails to drop, one of the men has to go outside and argue it out of exploding, through phenomenology.

I also suggested the addition of another character, named Commander Powell who, at the time that the picture begins, was killed in some kind of accident. Now, the men brood over his death, and the subsequent loss of purpose and meaning in their mission. He

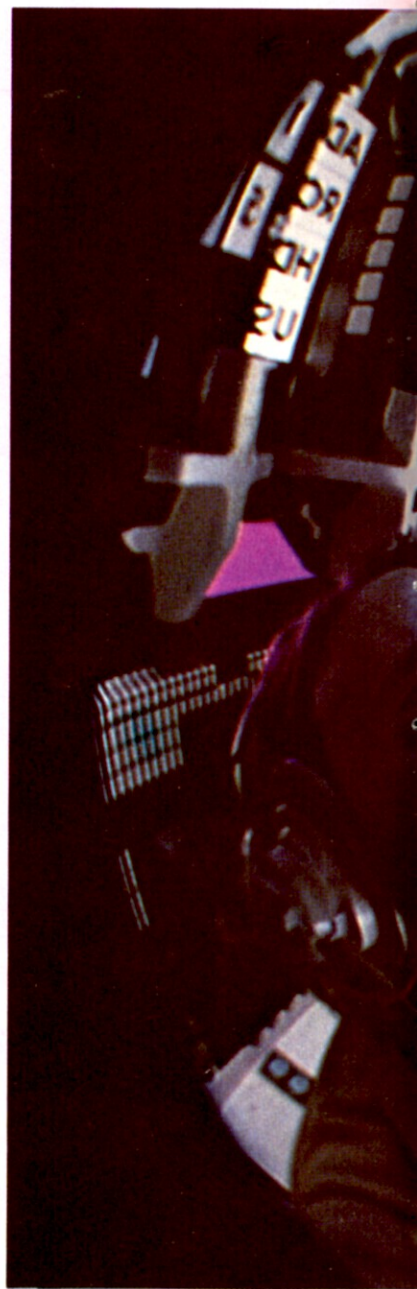
acts as sort of an invisible figure in motivating them.

Carpenter liked the ideas, and he incorporated them into a rough script entitled **THE ELECTRIC DUTCHMAN**. It went through a number of subsequent titles, like **THE COSMIC DUTCHMAN**, **NIGHT OF THE COLD SUN**, **PLANET FALL**, and **THE PLANET SMASHERS**. Finally, I suggested we call the ship something interesting that we can then call the movie. So, well into production, the name of the ship was changed from "The Centaur" to "The Dark Star."

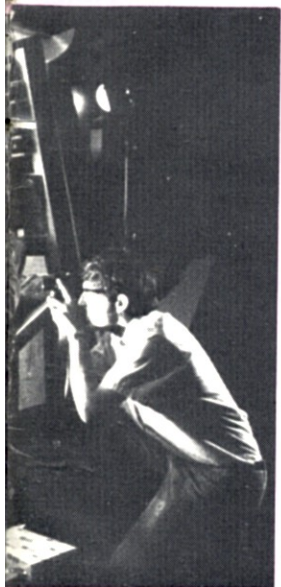
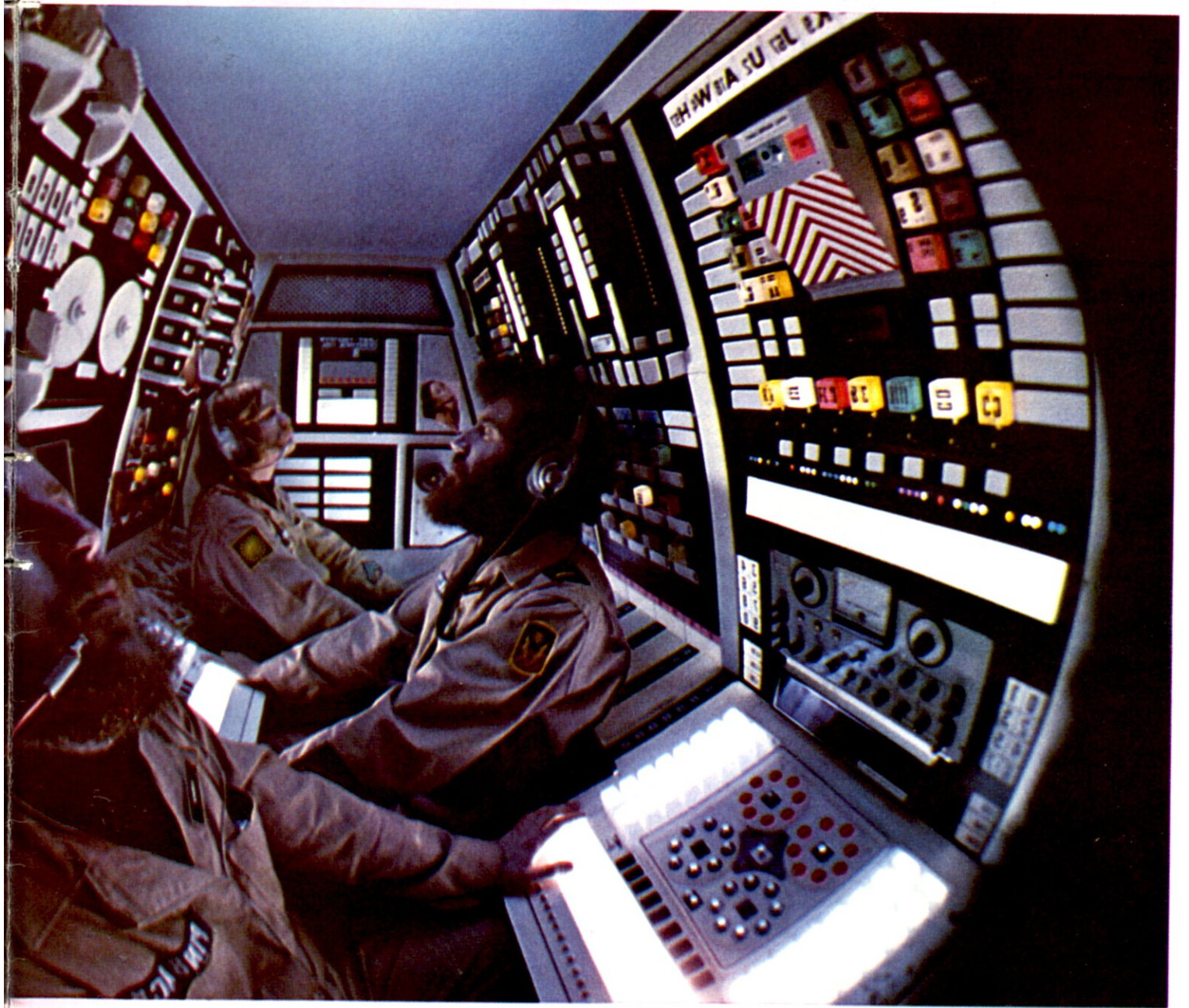
It is an absurdist comedy within the science fiction genre; sort of a *Waiting for Godot* in outer space, but it does have an action plot.

CFQ: What were Ron Cobb's and Jim Danforth's contributions in the film?

Scenes from the production of **DARK STAR**, an exciting new science fiction film being produced by two film students at the University of Southern California. Color: Pinback (Dan O'Bannon), Doolittle (Brian Narelle) and Boiler (Cal Kuniholm) at the controls of the "Dark Star," an interstellar spacecraft. Left: Cameraman Doug Knapp shooting the interior of the control room. Middle: Production and special effects designer Dan O'Bannon (who also acts in the film) makes some adjustments on a space suit. Right: Cameraman Doug Knapp and the film's director John Carpenter pose in front of the control room complex. **DARK STAR** is described by its makers as an absurdist comedy within the science fiction genre, a sort of *Waiting for Godot* in outer space.









O'BANNON: I've known Ron Cobb since 1969, when I looked him up in the phone book, and got to know him. When John and I started the project, we wanted to get ahold of him to help out. When Ron saw an unfinished version of the film, he was very enthusiastic and complimentary about it. After the screening, we went to a restaurant, and Ron started scribbling on a napkin with his pen the design for a space ship. It was spectacular and, after some alteration and modifying, we used his design for "The Dark Star."

I met Jim Danforth at a USC film screening, and when we decided to do the film, we asked Jim if he would do some paintings for us on the film. He painted the title sequence, outer space paintings, on huge sheets of window glass.

CFQ: What concept or style was used in directing the picture?

O'BANNON: John and I had two approaches we could have taken. The first was making the ship look like a Japanese submarine because it is constantly malfunctioning. We had the concept of having a lot of pipes with bandages around them, leaking water and steam, things falling apart, sweat dripping from the men, water on the floor, and rust. Just a total wreck.

The other direction we could have taken was to follow a clean, super-streamlined look. After some debate, we decided to go in for the latter approach.

As for the directorial style, Carpenter is very influenced by John Ford and Howard Hawks. Therefore, you won't find any long lens rack focusing, subliminal flashbacks, or hack-jump-cutting. It is shot in a wide-to-normal lens format, with a moving camera as much as possible.

The film has sort of a Hawksian look to it, in the way he would stage masters and movements.

CFQ: Was he influenced by any science fiction films, like THE THING possibly?

O'BANNON: He's very fond of many old science fiction films, but I don't think he takes his directorial style from any of them, except in music, which he is going to compose. The music is going to be primarily Bernard Herrmann on the moog, with some theremin stuff, like in DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL.

Perhaps John's favorite science fiction film is FORBIDDEN PLANET. He is also fond of the Quatermass films (CREEPING UNKNOWN, ENEMY FROM SPACE and FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH).

CFQ: Were you influenced by current science fiction films, like 2001 and SILENT RUNNING?

O'BANNON: The main influence of 2001 is in the special effects and production design. Neither John or myself are at all fond of the dramatic aspects of the film. We copied the trapezoidal designs of the ships interior in 2001, as well as some of the exteriors. Otherwise, not much of 2001's content influenced us. The talking bomb is not based on HAL, but from my adolescence I envisioned this idea, way before 2001.

Our response to the use of classical music in 2001, so imitated by filmmakers after it, is to use hillbilly music, which was John's idea.

We were nearly finished before SILENT RUNNING even opened, so there is no influence from it, although there might be some parallels, but no direct influence.

CFQ: How was the project financed, and how much was the film cost so far?

O'BANNON: It was financed out of both John's pocket and myself. We had to live from hand to mouth for a considerable period when we were making the film. So far, the film has cost us about \$5-6000.

CFQ: Because of all these difficulties, why would you make the film?

O'BANNON: In order to impress everyone. What we wanted to do is to

Above Right: A stellar explosion occurs behind Doolittle (Brian Narelle) during an EVA outside the ship. DARK STAR is the story of an interstellar ship and its crew whose mission it is to drop bombs on suns that are about to go super-nova, and the crisis precipitated when a bomb malfunctions.

demonstrate that John and I could make a film like this. In other words, it's a showcase. There are no plans now to distribute the film commercially at this time. We shot it in 16mm, using Eastman Commercial film, which is the standard color stock for 16mm. I believe the technical description of the film is EC-7252.

CFQ: What were some of the production problems?

O'BANNON: The special effects were a particular task because of no money at all. This meant that not only did I have to design everything with budget in mind and availability of materials, but I also had to usually build and do everything myself. Many of the sets were built almost entirely by myself from scratch. That is to say I was in there dragging lumber on the stage, hammering it together, dragging up wires, etc. Like the control room set, it took about a week to put up the frame and then it took about another week of 20-hour days by myself to assemble it. So that by the time it was finished, and we got ready to roll, I was in complete mental and physical exhaustion. It prevailed this way throughout the film, in which I had to build the space suits and the observation dome; make all the props and the costumes; do the make-up; build most of the miniatures; and always be present to manipulate all the elements as they were being shot.

Carpenter was responsible for placement of the camera and the control of the actors.

CFQ: So you functioned virtually as "everyman."

O'BANNON: That's right. I did story boards too, and designed the visuals for certain scenes.

One of my personal approaches to motion pictures is elaborate visual beauty; an aura of super-realism, in which it looks utterly real, but better. This is the type of atmosphere I enjoy creating.

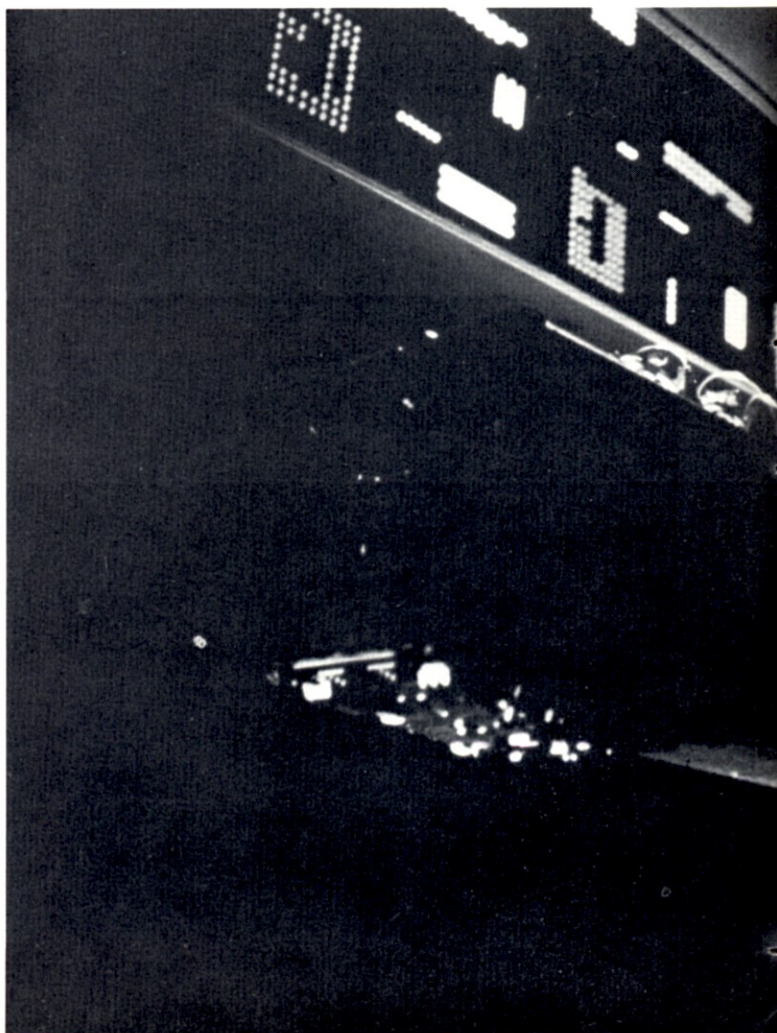
CFQ: What special effects are involved in DARK STAR, and how did you accomplish them?

O'BANNON: As writers, both John and myself made one grand mistake right from the beginning. We did not bother to figure out how we were going to do every effect when we wrote the script. This meant that when we got to some of the problems, they got real hairy.

There were several major areas of special effects involved. I would say the construction of the sets was relatively simple, but the "glass shot" was another problem. The "glass shot" traditionally is very similar to a matte shot in principle. In it, you combine a painting to live action, and make it look like something's there that isn't. This technique dates all the way back to the silent era. You line up the camera in back of the painting, and you photograph through the glass on which it's painted, to the actors in the background.

We used this principle not literally, but in a process I would call the "foreground model shot." I would build a model of a set in miniature, put it in front of the camera, and have people in the background. The best example of this was the observation dome, in which you have two men seated in a glass bubble on the top of the ship, talking inside it. I built the bubble at about one foot across, and shot through it with the actors in the background.

The main miniature was the ship, designed by Ron Cobb (satire cartoonist for the "L. A. Free Press"), and it was three feet long. The secondary miniature was the bomb, hanging on the







underside of the ship. The underside was built at about six feet long, and the bomb about one and a half feet. We had to build this so much larger because we shot in very close, and the bomb has a lot of detail.

In addition to this, we had puppets representing the spacemen whenever we had a long shot of them in space. They were built by Harry Walt and Greg Jein, based on photographs of the spacemen.

Originally, I had a cylindrical design for the bomb model, but I found it very hard to find cylindrical components. I went into a model shop, and ended up buying two boxes of a Fruehauf Refrigerator Truck model, and one of a Mazda Formula Sportscar. The Mazda provided a great deal of chrome detail, and the trucks provided the boxcar shape of it.

The ship was made by Greg Jein out of fiberglass. First, he had an enlarged drawing of the ship, and he traced it onto a block of polyurethane foam, and carved it out with a pocketknife. He then mixed up some kind of resinous goop, painted over it until it hardened, and it looked like a glazed cake, all green and shiney. He took fine-grained sandpaper, sanded it down, and then he took a matte knife and etched plating detail in it, and painted it. For the dome, he had to make a cast of the bubble, with a miniature of the man inside the injection mold. I did final print and detail on the rear of the ship.

Doing the ship floating in space, and the scenes with the bomb, proved rather difficult because it is hard to get a black background. You have to find someplace to hang the ship; we had a black stand for it. We resorted to a rather unusual technique of hanging a huge piece of black paper right in front of the camera, cutting a little hole in it that was shaped like the ship in order to black out the background.

I also had to build some spacesuits. I thought that they should look capable of supporting a man in a vacuum, which meant they couldn't be too limp or thin. I wanted the arms and legs to look as if they were inflated with air, not slack. I was very fortunate to discover something called glass-flex. It is a type of air-conditioning duct, like a coiled steel spring, with insulation wrapped around it, and then sealed tight with a thin, metallic plastic skin. It's hollow, and it looks inflated, and I used them for the arms and legs. For the body, I bought an asbestos aluminum fire suit at a surplus store, and hacked it down to what looked like a vest and a pair of shorts. I used ski gloves, and a pair of big rubber over-shoes for boots. I needed a helmet, and manufactured it using a large vacuform bubble, a vacuum cleaner hose for air hosing, and backpacks formed out of various objects like a baby basinette, a cookie tin, and some styrofoam packing sections from a typewriter.

All this had to be put on piecemeal, using friction tape, wrapping it on very heavily, connecting each body piece. The problem is that after all this was put on, there was no ventilation, and a person could suffocate and pass out. We took care of that by taking a piece of thin, flexible plastic tubing, about one half inch in diameter, stick it in the actor's mouth, and run it out through his sleeve. The actors could then grab it between their teeth, and breathe between takes. What happened is the actors turned very red in the face and sweated profusely, so I would take them outside, and pour ice water down their necks, and put cold compresses on their forehead.

**Below Left:** Thermostellar bomb #19 hanging in the bombay of the "Dark Star." The bomb is computerized and programmed verbally, and when it fails to eject from the ship, one of the crew must go outside the ship and argue it out of exploding, through phenomenology.

The next major area of special effects was animation, and a great deal of it. We had access to an Oxbury Animation Camera, which costs about \$20,000, and Bob Greenberg worked with it in animating the ship. John Wash animated all the readouts on the ship's panels, and this was done by a hand-made animation camera.

For the hyperdrive sequence, which is a point-of-view shot of the men accelerating through space in excess of the speed of light (similar to the slit-scan travelling color beam effects in 2001), we used the Oxbury. All that is a series of very rapid track-ins on black paper with pinholes punched on it, covered with red, blue, and green gels, and layed on an animation table with a light behind it so it glowed. The camera moved down automatically on the "artwork," shut itself off, moved itself up, and repeated the process. We overlapped these shots to give a "rushing" effect. The sound effect behind the scene is a 747 taking off, played 20% slower than normal.

Other sound effects ranged from an automatic hospital bed being raised and lowered, all the way to opening a very squeaky hinge on a stove, all for when you hear panels and doors sliding open. We had about half a dozen different, distinctive sounds for this.

Some of the outer space paintings were done by myself as well as by Danforth. I did the paintings of the planets that the men bombed, and one of them was done in two ways. One was a four foot disc of plywood, painted with acrylics and canvas spray paint, and we threw a curved shadow across it to give a rounding shape effect, using a piece of curved cardboard in front of a light. We also used a beach ball, inflated to five feet in diameter, and which we suspended by gluing a bathroom plunger to each side, and painted it with a spray gun.

**CFQ:** Do you feel that sciencefiction cinema is improving and maturing?

**O'BANNON:** Yes and no. The science fiction films in the early and middle 50s had a childlike, free-thinking sense of wonder, but unfortunately the execution was also on a childlike level. Today, science fiction films are executed on a more adult level, more serious approach, spectacular production, however the ideas are becoming more sterile. There seems to be an odd temerity to really confront ideas that are truly awe-inspiring. However, my opinion is practically worthless because I am not a critic. My critical views are very elementary.

**CFQ:** Do you prefer working in the science fiction genre?

**O'BANNON:** Yes, I do. I would like to make science fiction films that are truly fine. I would like to create some stuff that is sophisticated, adult, and as well-executed as anything you can find on the market, as well as being pure, hardcore science fiction and fantasy.

**CFQ:** What are your plans for working in the Hollywood system, and how do you regard your prospects?

**O'BANNON:** I regard the industry as rather anemic, but I regard motion pictures as primarily an art form, and secondarily as employment. I do plan on working in Hollywood because it has the greatest amount of resources for making movies, and it's the best place to make films.

As for my chances, I would say they are as good as anyone's. I am generally optimistic about working in the industry, and I don't feel a sense of desperation about it as most people do.

John and myself plan to work together in the future because we make an effective team, and to reinforce each other for getting into the industry.

**CFQ:** Are you planning another film in the future?

**O'BANNON:** John and I have a script we've been working on called **THEY BITE**. It's about giant bugs that come out of the ground and take over the world.



# ROMERO

## *An interview with the director of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*

When Continental Films dumped *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* onto the summer/fall drive-in circuit in 1968 with a typically gross exploitation campaign, who could have expected that this cheap, black and white horror film was anything more than what it appeared to be? Indeed, Continental Films and the entire distribution system has since been subject to criticism, that a film of undeniable merit such as George Romero's *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* was thrown away on the exploitation circuit like so many other trashy films. But really, even if Continental had realized the merit of the film that had come into their hands, would anyone have believed them if they had tried to market it on that basis? Probably not, because *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* is a cheap, black and white horror film and it is beyond public acceptance that it can also be a brilliant work of cinematic art.

Director George Romero is one of the film's makers that is chiefly responsible for its unexpected intelligence and sophistication. *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* was the collaborative effort of two Pittsburgh commercial film companies, The Latent Image, Inc., George Romero's company, and Hardman Associates, Inc., the firm of Karl Hardman who produced *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* with Russell W. Streiner. Both firms are still active at present in the production of advertising and promotional films, which is their primary business. The filming of *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* was completed over a number of months, during weekends and evenings, and during periods between regular film assignments. The company was short handed and attracted actors and technicians on a deferred payment basis, with most everyone participating for the fun of it or for the experience. The producers themselves doubled up with acting roles, Karl Hardman appearing as the ruthless coward Harry, and Russell Streiner as Johnny, the first victim of the ghouls in the film's opening scene. George Romero worked as his own cinematographer and also edited the film, and members of producer Streiner's family were pressed into service, Gary Streiner working as sound engineer and Jacqueline Streiner handling the script coordination and continuity.

George Romero has since gone on to produce three other films under the auspices of his Latent Image company, with distribution to be handled by Cambist Films: *THERE'S ALWAYS VANILLA* (retitled *THE AFFAIR*), a sentimental romantic drama, *JACK'S WIFE*, a story of witchcraft and the supernatural in suburbia, and *THE CRAZIES*, dealing with the accidental contamination of a New England town with the weapons of biological warfare.

CFQ: Do you have any special interest or fondness for making "horror films?"

ROMERO: I didn't in the beginning. When we made *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*, we made it as our first picture and our friends in distribution circles told us to make something exploitive because it's safer. So we decided to do a "horror film." Now when we did it, we said, we're not just going to do a horror film, we're going to really "go out" with it and try and make it "gut-sy."

So then I got into that. I got into a fascination with it from the standpoint that it hasn't really been done very often. I have a theory that there are so many films that haven't been done, that have been done a hundred times, but haven't been done yet.

One of them for example, like one of the films that I really want to do and I'm talking to some people about it now, is *TARZAN OF THE APES*. Because it hasn't been done yet. I'd like to do it exactly the way Burroughs wrote it, and I think it would be a tremendous piece of Victorian kind of escapism. There's an example of it. There's been what, 25 or 30 Tarzan films made and it's never been made that way.

We've been digressing a little bit, but that's how I got into *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*, and since then I've had kind of a fascination with the macabre. Coming off *LIVING DEAD* I got into kind of a study of the occult. Our third film,

*JACK'S WIFE*, is an occult film. Which I think, again, takes a little bit of a different approach to the study, not so much of the occult, but how it works on somebody's mind. Of course, that's been done, but we kind of combined it with contemporary life and what's going on today. We took a suburban housewife with all her frustrations, and all of the women's lib being pumped into her, and did it from the standpoint of this woman whose head gets all messed up with it without any real understanding. The film doesn't claim that there's any efficacy in magic, witchcraft, anything like that, it's just purely in her head. It's not a metaphysical film really. It's a film about what happens to this woman who doesn't know what she's fooling around with, but starts fooling around with it and then starts wondering what she's doing and wondering whether it's working.

CFQ: To get it straight, for the record, you have four films to your credit. Is that right?

ROMERO: I'm cutting, now, the fourth film, which is *THE CRAZIES*, the one you're in.

CFQ: Do you feel *THE CRAZIES* is your best?

ROMERO: Well, so far, technically, I think it's the best. I think in certain aspects of it I was more successful in getting what I wanted. Of course this is the first time that I've had enough of a budget and enough people and enough sets, you know, exactly what I needed. So I think from that standpoint it's the most successful one, although I think *JACK'S WIFE* is probably a better film...

CFQ: ...than *LIVING DEAD*?

ROMERO: No, than *THE CRAZIES*... but I don't think it will do as well at the boxoffice.

CFQ: Are there any horror films that have influenced you, do you feel?

ROMERO: Influenced me? I don't know.

CFQ: Your shadows, I see a lot of shadows in your work, which I think is good...

ROMERO: I don't know. That might be influenced more by my background and training as a painting and design student, I think. I just have a concentration on composition and lighting and aspects like that.

CFQ: Were you born in New York City?

ROMERO: Yea.

CFQ: How long have you been based in Pittsburgh?

ROMERO: I came out here to go to school, came out here to go to Carnegie Tech and study

### Interview Conducted By TONY SCOTT

Tony Scott is a native of Pittsburgh and now program director of WBVP Radio. He began his career as a radio announcer in Rockford, Illinois in 1964, and later worked in television at Channel 13 in Pittsburgh and WTAP in Parkersburg, West Virginia. He has participated in local theatre for the past two years and his first film role is that of Deputy Sheriff Shade in George Romero's latest film, *THE CRAZIES*. Scott calls his role in *THE CRAZIES* the only light comic relief in the first thirty minutes of the film. This interview with George Romero was conducted after viewing the first half hour of the film in rough form, an experience that left him short of breath and frenetically anxious to view the finished product. Tony estimates that 60% of his thirty years on earth has been spent in the darkness of movie theatres.

Right: George Romero during the filming of *THE CRAZIES*, a co-production between Romero's Latent Image Company and Cambist Films as distributor.









Left: Scenes taken during the filming of **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**. Director George Romero (with camera) films Judith O'Dea's frenzied escape from the cemetery.

painting and design and Spanish background. I'm, I guess maybe, influenced a little by the Spanish painters. I think that perhaps my approach to the visualization of something comes out of that rather than any influence from any director or cinematographer that I've studied.

CFQ: I think that may be what gives a film that Romero touch.

ROMERO: I think that anyone who has an eye for composition, or anyone who has an eye for a translation of anything to a two-dimensional format is influenced by two-dimensional things that he's seen, not so much by film. You can't really study a film. No matter how many times you watch a film, you may see any given shot for a matter of, in the aggregate, two or three minutes, whereas you can look at a painting or a graphic or a painting that you have in your home or something that you really like, endlessly. You may stare at a painting for hours.

CFQ: The theme of the first film that you did, **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, how did you develop it?

ROMERO: Well, I wrote a short story which dealt with, which was in fact, an allegory, a statement about society, which dealt with a siege by the living dead. It was much less contrived, I think, than the film is, from the standpoint that it was purely allegorical. Now a lot of the people that have seen the film are seeing the allegory coming out of the film anyway.

CFQ: I've heard it called a political film.

ROMERO: That, maybe, was in my head when directing it, when we were looking for an approach to it, but I don't think it is really reflected. I wasn't actually thinking of it, wasn't conscious of it, with the exception of a few scenes, like the scenes with the posse and of course the final scene. It wasn't a conscious effort on my part to direct that allegory into the film, but I guess it was a strong enough influence that it came out anyway and people are seeing it's there.

CFQ: Did you have any trouble with the cast and crew, getting them to take it seriously, because it was a horror film?

ROMERO: Not really, no. Course, we've always had a pretty good group of people. We have a totally in house unit. We work with each other well. We know what our intentions are and we don't have any internal strife or anything like that so we have a pretty good time. You have fun no matter what you're doing. You can be doing **HAMLET** and I think you'll have fun doing it.

CFQ: In horror cinema there are two techniques, the suggestive school, which creates a feeling of horror indirectly through the viewer's imagination, and the graphic school, which visually shocks the viewer. You seem to do both pretty well. Could you discuss your technique and approach in this context?

ROMERO: Well I prefer the subtler approach, really, which wouldn't be indicated by **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, which is why I think I am happier with **JACK'S WIFE** than I am with **LIVING DEAD** or with **THE CRAZIES**. I'm into Don Siegel pretty hard. **INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS** was a tremendous film which had a little bit of both, but it was more suggestive. It was more moody. The horror was more subtle.

CFQ: The actual production of **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**, did you have any trouble getting money or backing for it?

ROMERO: Yea. It was our first time out and Pittsburgh is a very wealthy city, but it's the kind of money that's in Pittsburgh; it's not gambling money; it's nuts and bolts industrial money. It's very difficult. When we first went around, we tried for about three years before we made **LIVING DEAD** to get people to fund some kind of a project, thinking all along that we were going to do a serious piece. In fact, we had a script written, that I had written, that we were trying to promote. We had an entire package put together and we couldn't get any cash here and we tried to get cash out of New York. People were interested in the script, but they wanted to buy it, take it away, and make it. We said no, our idea is to make the film. When we told people here that we're going to make a feature film that's going to





be released they would say: "Uh huh, oh yea," and walk away from you. That was that. We just couldn't do it. We finally formed another corporation. There were ten of us, and the corporation was called Image Ten. That's where it got its name. We each put in a little bit of seed money, which was enough to buy our film stock, and we talked to the cast on the basis of deferred payments. The cast agreed and we started to shoot and of course we had, and we still do, commercial and industrial films. And so that film was shot over a period, with great breaks, over a period of about nine months, with great breaks in between to come back and do a pickle commercial or something, which was distressing. After we got some footage in the can where we could screen rushes for people, people started coming 'round saying: "Hey, that looks like a movie!" and we said, well that's what it is! And they said: "Oh yea," and they started to put up money and of course then we sold stock in the corporation which we already had formed and got the whole thing complete so that we had it completely funded when we went into New York, unencumbered. In other words, we didn't have any outstanding debts to any labs or anything like that which we were anticipating, so that was lucky for us in that we didn't have to give up any percentages to get it finished, and we have yet to have to do that.

CFQ: Who is John A. Russo?

ROMERO: He wrote the script with me. We actually collaborated on it. It was based on a story that I wrote and when I started to meet it out towards a screenplay we had to start shooting film, because we figured we were going to have interruptions and we were running out of weather. I had written about half of it and at that point turned over to Jack and he and I worked on the rest of it. He would do drafts on it and come up to the location and we'd work it out.

CFQ: Did you work from a complete script from the beginning, or work it out as you went?

ROMERO: We had the structure, we had the scenario, but we did some of the scenes--in fact I can remember one morning sitting out on the porch of that house and writing a scene that we shot that afternoon because we happened to have the people together.

CFQ: What particular scene was that?

ROMERO: It was the little interchange. It's a difficult scene for anyone to remember that isn't really into the film. It's a little scene where Helen Cooper comes up from the cellar and says: "There's another broadcast at three ayem," or something, "Maybe we should try to make it to the car." And Ben, Duane Jones, is saying: "You have a car?" It's where Ben discovers that they have a car, when he wants to know where it is.

CFQ: Was there anything cut from the final version of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD that you would have preferred to have left in, and if you could change it now, what would you do?

ROMERO: Yea, there were a few things. The feast on the front lawn was inserted again where I had another cut, towards the end of the film when they're watching the second telecast they look out the window and I had expansive shots of the fields with just the ghouls dotting the countryside, which I felt at that point would have been more effective, but the distributor insisted that we cut back to the ghouls eating flesh. I said, no, we've had that, but of course, I didn't get my way.

The film was about ten minutes longer. That was a couple of more dialogue scenes that I felt were kind of important that help set up the characterizations of some of the people, background stuff on the people.

CFQ: This seems to happen to almost every film nowadays.

ROMERO: It depends on who you are. That was our first one out, and of course, even on this last one, THE CRAZIES, we had distributor interference. The first three films we did on spec, from the standpoint that we got the funding, we took the risks, we signed the notes for the money and we went in without having discussed the film with the distributor other than very superficially with regard to, what do you think about this script, or, are we gonna sit with this on the shelf. In some cases, in the case of THERE'S ALWAYS VANILLA we went ahead despite urgings from the distributors to not bother to make it. We went ahead and made it and it is now in distribution. We have not been hurt too badly by it.

CFQ: Besides making a lot of money, NIGHT

OF THE LIVING DEAD had pretty good critical reviews from a lot of people. Did you expect that, that it would get the accolades that it did?

ROMERO: No. I knew some people were going to like it. I knew what it had, I knew that it had some guts and I knew that certain things in it were cinematically successful. I really didn't think that people would see that allegory. Maybe I was underestimating. I don't think most people do see it, because it is very subtle. Often times I laugh about some of the interpretations read into it. We've had some outlandish things said about it. I know that aspects of it are cinematically successful. I didn't expect this much critical acclaim, which has really boled me over, and it seems to be universal. We get press from overseas and it's the same old story. We get better press out of the city. Our press in Pittsburgh isn't very good, but we're getting tremendous press everywhere else.

I didn't expect that much because there are so many things in the film that I consider to be bad. There's so much terrible dialogue and there are several really poor performances. Technically, the film is not that bad, but Christ, our commercial work is better than that! We were working under such adverse conditions. And I think being so close to the project from those standpoints I felt that those were too glaring to be overlooked.

CFQ: Do you think the "Reader's Digest" article helped the film, or hindered it?

ROMERO: That kind of stuff never hurts. People that write biting things like that are defeating their own purpose because all they do is create a lot of curiosity. That might not be entirely true. There might be some parents who read that and then didn't send their kids to see it, which is just as well. That was picked up from a newspaper article and was then picked up by "Life" magazine, and was quoted by "Life" magazine. The film had some controversy right from the jump. But the film really didn't have its big life in its first release. It went out as a showcase piece. It went out with a film called DR. WHO AND THE DALEKS, which was an English thing. It circulated around and made good money and it did get some damn good word of mouth. It was on the "drive-in circuit" and it was because it was so gutsy and unmitigating and unrelenting.

CFQ: Was it only financial considerations that forced you to do NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD in black and white? Would you do it in color now? What do you think of color horror films as compared to black and white?

ROMERO: I think you can do a good job. You have to be very careful with color. Not as much now as you used to with the development of the new stocks and so forth. You can get good, subtle stuff. I think a lot of people were afraid of color for a long time because you had to light it brilliantly, you had that pop-in Technicolor look. You can do subtle things with color now and that's purely a technical development, so I'm not afraid of color. I don't know what I would have done had the money been available. The decision to do it in black and white was budgetary, in answer to that question which everyone asks. But I don't know really, it's a question I can't answer. I couldn't answer that question unless I knew that I had the money for color and actively chose black and white and then I could say, yea, I actively did it. I don't know. Right now, I feel that it's better in black and white and I don't know if I'd have gone with color or not. I really don't.

Right: Scenes from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD which is currently in release through the Walter Reade Organization. Fully four years after its initial release the film is still receiving a surprising number of bookings throughout the country, particularly for special midnight screenings on weekends. 1: The ghouls wander about aimlessly outside the beleaguered farmhouse. 2: Judy (Judith Ridley) tends to Karen (Kira Schon) who was bitten by the ghouls as Karen's mother (Marilyn Eastman) comes down into the basement to relieve her. 3: A brief interlude away from the farmhouse, as Presidential advisors and military men are interviewed about the dead returning to life. Hitchcock-like, director George Romero makes an appearance as the interviewer. 4: The ghouls are stopped in the end by a simple bullet through the brain, as the sheriff's posse and state troopers gun them down.







CFQ: Do you feel that comedy is appropriate in horror films?

ROMERO: Oh sure.

CFQ: Or do you feel it is counterproductive? Hammer Films very seldom have humor. Does it make it almost camp when it's too serious?

ROMERO: I think it does. Hammer films have excellent production values, they have a tremendous feel for that gothic aura, they have good people, they have good actors, substantial people, but there is something about their films that are just... you know... stiff upper lip, and every damn one is exactly the same. There's something about it that's just, you know, it's kind of on a line and you never get off it. I think you can go one way or another with it, and I don't think it has a counterproductive value at all.

There's stuff in *LIVING DEAD* that gets a kind of nervous laughter. Well, we saw this 25 minutes of *THE CRAZIES* here, and there's a few laughs in it, but they're kind of nervous laughs, they're a release. I know Hitchcock has a philosophy, he will always follow a very tense sequence with a little piece of comedy. He does it all the time. If you study his work, it works very well. In *LIVING DEAD* we have a couple of instances like that. Right in the middle of the uptight-thing with the posse, the sheriff, what he is saying is straight, in fact that was an ad lib interview, I left some of the things in purely for the chuckle. I don't think that it's counterproductive at all.

CFQ: Does it bother you when you're in an audience, say with your own film, and the audience reacts differently than you expected them to. Does it bother you at all?

ROMERO: No. I always find it interesting. I really think than anyone that endeavors to do anything creative is really trying to communicate, and reaching people in any way is a substantial thing.

When I was acting I did a play called "The Connection," and played a character named Leach, and I had to come down center stage and take a needle in the arm, and take an overdose and wind up going into fits and wind up with my arm hanging off the proscenium with the needle hanging out of the vein. We did it with nose putty. And every night it was a different reaction. It was really a tremendous thing. We got nervous laughter to that, we got some cringing, we got some people in nausea, and it's just that you know that you're doing something. That's a gratifying thing. I think I've seen *NIGHT OF THE LIVING*

Above: Scenes from *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*. The film's black hero, Ben, is played by Duane Jones. Left: Ben attempts to board-up and reinforce the windows of the farmhouse as the ghouls claw their way through. Right: Ben drags one of the ghouls from the farmhouse and sets it on fire to ward off the others.

*DEAD* with audiences three or four times, other than in private screenings with smaller groups. It has, pretty much, a uniform reaction.

CFQ: I've got the stock "Johnny Carson" question coming up. Sex and nudity has become increasingly evident in recent horror films. Do you regard this obligatory nudity as an obstacle or a nuisance?

ROMERO: I think it's a nuisance from the standpoint that I don't know how much of my life I've spent arguing with distributors over how much and how little and so forth. It gets a little bit ludicrous when you're sitting around saying 36 frames of tit rather than 24. I don't understand it. I think if you want to use it, and it serves a purpose then you should use it.

CFQ: You're almost a pioneer, in that *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* features one of the first bare asses seen in horror films!

ROMERO: (laughter) I don't think so. No.

CFQ: At the time of that film you didn't have all the ratings and all the nudity in films.

ROMERO: No. In fact it was just on the cusp. The rating system was just coming in. That film wasn't rated.

CFQ: What do you think *THE CRAZIES* should get? I don't think it should get an R.

ROMERO: I don't think it should get an R, but I think it will. In the first place, an independent has a hell of a harder time with the people that decide the ratings than a major studio does. Actually, I don't think the rating system makes any sense, frankly. I think all the X rating did was license a lot of meaningless pornography. I think that a sexual passage in a film, if it's gonna mean something, is fine, and I don't give a damn how graphic it is. I don't have any compunctions about shooting one, if it has its place, but I won't do it randomly. In fact, I had arguments all over hell on *JACK'S WIFE* with the distributors. There are two sexual passages in *JACK'S WIFE*, and I had all kinds of hell telling people "no," it makes no sense to make these porno, because it's just gonna detract. The woman wants and needs sexual

release and the first one is the most graphic of the two because she finally gets it after 45 minutes of ponderous film. You need enough to show that release. To show the change in her. But you didn't have to go that graphic with it.

*LIVING DEAD* got an X rating in Great Britain because they take violence into account as much or more than morality when rating their product over there and I do think that that makes some sense. I don't know that any of that stuff does any damage to a developing mind watching it. I don't know that any kid, unless he's disturbed to begin with, is going to see something happening on the screen and go out and immediately do it. I don't think any kid is gonna go and watch *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* and go out and find a rubber phallus and go out and start beating somebody with it. I might be wrong. I may do some harm. I really don't think so. I do think that possibly violence is gonna affect people more than seeing sex on the screen. I don't think that pornography is unhealthy really, in that sense. It might be very healthy.

CFQ: Duane Jones is the only character in *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* about whom we are given no information about background, job, family or residence, and as he is the central character, why was this done?

ROMERO: One of the scenes I mentioned earlier that was cut, was one of the background scenes. It gave a little bit of his background and told who he was and where he was going.

CFQ: What has Duane Jones done since *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD*?

ROMERO: He's always been active. He's acting. He's in New York City. He's done some off-Broadway stuff. He has a background in education and he teaches at an underprivileged school up there. Frankly, he's more interested in that, than in acting, although he enjoys it very much.

CFQ: Ben (Duane Jones) convinces everyone to fight it out upstairs, and then when everybody is dead, he winds up surviving in the cellar he prevented them from taking refuge in. Why was this done?

ROMERO: It was just another little irony. I mean it was an intentional irony. There was an establishing sequence that keyed that up harder. There wasn't any specific dialogue, but there were some takes that he did. If you noticed, it's a little choppy right at the point where he's going into the cellar and the little girl is coming up. There was realization on his part, but the dis-





tributor felt that it wasn't registering so it was cut out.

CFQ: The lighting in the daylight scenes is natural and almost documentary-like, while lighting in the night scenes is very expressionistic. Was this intentional?

ROMERO: Well, we've talked about that in the mention of my artistic background.

CFQ: What lighting techniques were used?

ROMERO: That was another thing that was kind of budgetary. In the daylight scenes we just didn't use light, because we used just ambient, natural light.

CFQ: How would the film have been different if it had been made by AIP in Hollywood?

ROMERO: Well, I don't know. I think that there probably would have been a scientist in the group, explaining what was going on. I think the ending would have been different. In fact, American International turned the picture down on the basis of it being too unmitigating. They told us that if we would reshoot the end of it they would distribute it. Have Ben survive and come out somehow.

CFQ: Do you think artistic and innovative horror films can be made under the Hollywood system where commercial considerations are so pervasive?

ROMERO: Oh, sure you can. I think you can. Well, I've been trying to walk the line. We're still independent. We've tried to walk the line. I think that our films have been commercial, but at the same time have had some intelligence in them. JACK'S WIFE is an intelligent commentary of what goes on in the mind, yet it's commercial enough that I'm sure, in fact I know, that it's going to be released. In fact, we've had inquiries about it and are negotiating.

CFQ: Your most recent production is THE CRAZIES. Are you going to stick with that title?

ROMERO: I hope to hell not! The original title was THE MAD PEOPLE, and I liked that better. Again, that film, as an original story, was written as a pure allegory. The basic premise being that everyone in the world is operating at some level of insanity. You know, the old question, what is sane, what is insane? The device that was used in the story was the accidental spill of a biological weapon into the water supply of a little town, which enabled us to look at people really operating, that is to crystalize this operation of different types of people at varying levels of insanity. And it was again purely an allegory, and

Above: Scenes from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, which has become an acknowledged classic of the horror genre only four years after its release. Left: The ghouls wander about aimlessly outside the beleaguered farmhouse. Right: Helen Cooper (Marilyn Eastman) meets death at the hands of her daughter, turned into a ghoul.

the distributors liked it, and I knew immediately when the distributors liked it that they liked the premise and not the allegory, once again. In the rewrite of the script which I did collaboratively with Lee Hessel, who is distributing the film, we went that way, we went literally, we went plot line with it, although I think again, the allegory is still there.

CFQ: Do you think there is a similarity between THE CRAZIES and NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and if so was this intentional due to the commercial success of your first film?

ROMERO: No, it really wasn't. We had the basic story which was written by one of our commercial directors here, and the script came out of that. On my draft, my version of the script, I wasn't looking for any intentional similarities at all. I think that some people are gonna say that it has similarities. One of the commanding officers in the film is a black man, and it's the same thing, a band of people trying to survive against this onslaught, in this case, military personnel trying to button up a town. And it does, in that sense, have those similarities, but beyond that the similarity is gone. It's a different commentary altogether.

CFQ: Were you satisfied with the way Continental distributed NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD? Would you have done it differently?

ROMERO: Yes, I would have promoted it a little subtler. I would have understated, that's all. I was a little bit distressed with the way they handled it. I felt that it could have done better. I felt that it could have even done some key run.

CFQ: Have you been approached by any Hollywood studio to do a film?

ROMERO: With a few offers, not directly from studios. As you say, most of the production is being done independently now. I've been approached by several independents and been written into several proposals, and several of them didn't come through. One of them I turned down, on the basis of being able to do it here.

CFQ: Do you plan on making more horror

films?

ROMERO: I don't know.

CFQ: You're gonna make films?

ROMERO: Yea, right.

CFQ: The content is not important.

ROMERO: Not really, no. I have a script I wrote and very much want to do, and I would really like to do TARZAN like I mentioned.

CFQ: Which ape call did you prefer, the MGM or the other?

ROMERO: (laughing) Neither. I didn't like any of them. Didn't sound like an ape.

That's what I'd like to do. I'd like to get in touch with Kubrick and get those ape suits. (laughing) And really do the number, or a larger portion of that.

CFQ: It's been so long since anybody has made a good Tarzan.

ROMERO: It's never been made, I don't think it's ever been made. The closest one was Elmo Lincoln. It came closest to being the "ape man." But that wasn't it. It was off base. It was off target.

Jane should be in it, but Jane should be in it the way Burroughs wrote it. He should come up to the burning mansion in his big limousine and rescue her, in the southern mansion, and bring her off to the jungle.

I think it would have some pertinence today. It's a tremendous little statement in itself, if you want an original hippy. That's what he is and that's the way it should be done. He goes back to the jungle for a sabbatical every once in a while. When he wants to get something off his chest. And he's a beautiful guy. It should be written that way. He's a very intelligent, very glib kind of a man, a man about the world.

CFQ: Would you pick a known actor to play Tarzan?

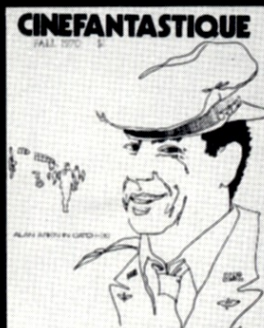
ROMERO: Yea. Of course I really don't know. I really don't have any idea. You know, when he was a little younger looking, I think probably Connery would have been pretty good. Like Connery as he looked in DR. NO or FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE, probably would have been pretty good looking. I'm just thinking of physical dynamics. I really don't know who would be good.

CFQ: You were, I guess, raised on Weissmuller?

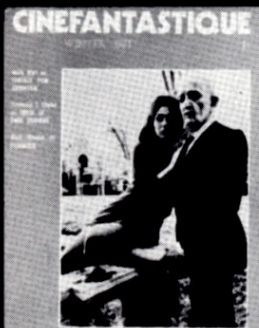
ROMERO: Yea, right. Weissmuller and then Lex Barker. But they were the same, they were all that Hollywood image, the romanticized image of the ape man who lived in the jungle and who



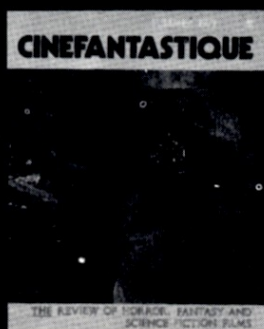
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beat up on the baddies who were after the ivory.

CFQ: Do you think you'd have any trouble making a TARZAN film with the Black movement being what it is?

ROMERO: I don't think so.

CFQ: There's the problem of the white ape beating up the blacks.

ROMERO: No, that doesn't happen very often in the Burroughs stuff really. And when it happens it's no kind of a jab. You know, he's in that society, there are goodies and baddies, and he's in a predominantly black society. I don't think there's really any sweat there at all.

CFQ: Have you ever got into Burroughs fantasy?

ROMERO: The other stuff, yea. Oh, I'd love to do some of that too.

CFQ: Would you like to do a western?

ROMERO: Yea, I think I would. Although I used to say what I'm saying about Tarzan now. I used to say they've never made a good western and suddenly, along came THE WILD BUNCH and some of the others that I think have been particularly good. I'd still like to do it, but I guess my interest has been knocked out of me kind of a little bit by seeing some pretty good stuff on the screen. Not from the standpoint that I'm not going to compete with that, but I've lost interest in doing it just for the sake of doing it because it hasn't been done.

CFQ: It would be kind of hard to do in Pittsburgh anyway?

ROMERO: (laughing) Oh yea...

I'm a romantic. I'd really like to do just a straight romantic thing.

CFQ: Like your film THE AFFAIR?

ROMERO: Well, no. That was a spinoff of the trend at the time. It was another attempt on our part to walk the line. Make something commercial that was trying to be a little bit intelligent too, and that was a spinoff of THE GRADUATE/GOODBYE, COLUMBUS period and is really all that is and that's all I can say about it, although I think it has a nice light feeling to it.

CFQ: When can we look forward to seeing JACK'S WIFE and THE CRAZIES or THE MAD PEOPLE, whatever the title may be?

ROMERO: THE AFFAIR should be starting to play in New York right about now. JACK'S WIFE is coming out of the lab within a couple of weeks, but by the time that gets sold and a campaign worked on, and everything else, it's going to be quite some time, and I just have no answer on JACK'S WIFE. THE CRAZIES, in fact, is going to be out before JACK'S WIFE even though we shot it after JACK'S WIFE, for several reasons. First of all, it was presold. We had the distributor before we produced the film, and in fact, it's a coproduction with the distributor, Cambist Films, which is Lee Hessel. Secondly, it was shot in 35mm and JACK'S WIFE was shot in 16. JACK'S WIFE has yet to be, once it's sold, blown up, whereas THE CRAZIES, once I get the cut, we can have a print in a few weeks. I think THE CRAZIES will probably be opening sometime, well, he's hoping to open it around Thanksgiving. That might be optimistic, but I would say definitely before the end of the year or right at the end of the year.

CFQ: Do you think THE CRAZIES will be a "drive-in" movie like NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD was, or will it be an "indoor." Do you think spring or summer would be a better release date for a horror film, or does it matter?

ROMERO: I don't consider THE CRAZIES being a horror film, really. It's science fiction to the extent that FAIL SAFE was science fiction, and things like that, but it's more at that level. It isn't really fantasy. I think that THE CRAZIES could go first run easily. I think it will probably have great success in the showcases.

CFQ: I hope it's not going to get saddled to the bottom half of some double-bill. Do you know anything about that?

ROMERO: I think when they open it--I know he is planning on opening it in New York. I think he is gonna showcase it in New York, but he's really not sure. Of course, he hasn't seen any of it. Depending on what it looks like, he'll either give it a first run, key run situation, or he'll open it showcase, but that's New York, which differs, very often from different parts of the country. I know that in Pittsburgh it will play by itself in a first run house when it first opens. But in New York it is very difficult and very expensive to



open a film key run and you can loose your shirt just trying to promote it in the city of New York, and if it duds, it duds, and you've really lost a lot of money and you've got to play a few other cities just to recover that.

CFQ: Then he's not really planning on a world premier in Pittsburgh now?

ROMERO: I don't know what he's doing. I know he had a miserable failure with *THE AFFAIR*, which was then called *THERE'S ALWAYS VANILLA* here in Pittsburgh. The same thing happened to us. Our only really bad review was in Pittsburgh on that film and I think it hurt it a little bit here. Everywhere else it has played it has gotten pretty good reviews. I don't know really. That's entirely up to the people who are going to be developing the campaign and promoting it.

CFQ: After viewing the first 25 minutes of the rushes on *THE CRAZIES* today all I can say is what a pace! Do you have any idea what your running time will be and what they'll cut it down to?

ROMERO: I'm shooting for 90 to 100. I estimated the script from the jump at about 90 or 100 and so it'll be somewhere in there. There seems to be a rule of thumb, which I can't really explain, that a film has to be 90 minutes. I think that some distributors feel that if a film goes 91 that everyone is gonna get up out of their seats when the sweep hand hits 90 and miss the ending. I really don't understand that. I think if the film holds your interest it's not important.

I've seen this reel we saw today on *THE CRAZIES* about four times. Normally, by about the second or third time I get super critical and I start cringing in my seat while I'm watching the stuff because I know there are things that--and I say to myself: "Christ! Why did I do that! How did I miss that." But this one keeps me cookin'. And that 25 minutes rolls and it seems like about 10 or 15. It's a very brutally paced unrelenting kind of a piece, which is one of the things that I was shooting for, and it deals basically with a commentary on the military.

CFQ: Don't you think television would ruin this if they ever showed it?

ROMERO: Yea, but I don't know if they could show it. One of our negotiations on the script was with a television outfit that funds and produces those movies for TV. They looked at the script. They really wanted it, but they told us what would have to be done to it, in order to put it on TV.

CFQ: Take out the military and everything else.

ROMERO: Right. It would have been too tame for what it's saying. The language isn't too heavy and that wouldn't bother me. They may be reluctant because of the subject matter.

CFQ: I don't know if we should discuss the ending at all. That burns the hell out of me when I see an interview about how a movie ends.

ROMERO: Well, let's not.

CFQ: Could we discuss the ending that was shot or the ending that you had in mind and just say that there's going to be a different ending. Would that suffice, or should we just shut up about it?

ROMERO: Well, it doesn't bother me. Originally, the town was gonna get wiped out.

CFQ: Would you describe that scene that you had for me at the end. That's what I wanted to get to?

ROMERO: The romantic leads were to get seperated. Nobody knows what's going on. Suddenly the military moves in and--bang!--they're all over the place. As it gradually unfolds you find out that they spilt, because of the Presidential order to dump the bioweapons, that they deactivated one of the weapons and they were transporting it for dumping and the plane crashed and you find out then that deactivation means only about 98-99% and therefore there is some active virus in the water supply in the town.

We're dealing with the military people and with the town's people, and we're dealing with the two romantic leads of the civies. They get seperated and at the very end--the whole time there's a bomber over the town in case the perimeter breaks, because of the possibility of the virus being carried out, there's the chance that they have to bomb the town. We were going to end it with the two lovers, after having been seperated, running toward each other and just before they reach each other on the screen, the screen was gonna go white and they were gonna destroy the town with the bomb. But we didn't do that.

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# KAMINSKY

## On *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*

Stuart M. Kaminsky received his Ph.D. in film from Northwestern University, doing his doctoral dissertation on the films and career of Don Siegel. He has completed a book on Siegel now being readied for publication. In addition to the Siegel film book, Kaminsky has published articles in "Take One," "The Journal of Popular Film," and "Panorama," has written five detective stories, five unpublished novels and a screenplay. He is presently an assistant professor in the division of Radio-TV-Film at Northwestern University.







...the most subtle film in the science fiction cycle with no visual horror whatever.

There are no moments of great violence in *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. We see no one die on screen (and, technically, no one dies in the film). There are no monsters and few special effects. The special effects are confined totally to the construction of a few pods shown only briefly. The essence of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* is its aura of normalcy. It is normalcy, the acceptance of the status quo, the desire to escape from the pain of the abnormal that creates the sense of horror in the film.

One problem in dealing with the film is the frame, the prologue and epilogue. The film, as released, opens with Dr. Miles Bennell in a hospital claiming to an incredulous psychiatrist (played by Whit Bissell) that creatures from outer space have taken over the town of Santa Mira, California. Miles then proceeds to tell his story of the pod take-over which we see in flashback with Miles' voice narrating at the start. The film ends with Miles concluding his story to the psychiatrist who appears on the verge of having him taken away. At the critical moment another physician says that a man has been killed driving a truck filled with strange pods. The psychiatrist believes Miles and the film ends with the doctor on the phone asking for the F. B. I.

The problem with the opening and closing sections just discussed is similar to that of the frame sections of *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* (1919) in which a madman tells a story and then we return to him in the hospital. Don Siegel, who directed *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, did not want the frame, nor did his writer Daniel Mainwaring, according to discussions I have had with them both. By the same token, the writers of *THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI* were opposed to the frame. In both cases, the objection was that the frame offered an out, a possible note of affirmation whereas they saw their films as deeply pessimistic.

Mainwaring wrote the frame sequences after Allied Artists' executives previewed the film and decided that audiences did not understand the plot. Siegel reluctantly directed the frame sequences knowing that another director would be called in to do them if he refused. Says screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring (pronounced mainwere): "The frame was added after several bad previews. The audiences--bad ones--couldn't understand the film and because the Mirisches threatened to bring in another director and writer to make changes, I made the changes and convinced Don, against his will, to shoot them. I did it because I didn't want a stranger completely screwing up our work."

My primary objection to the frame is that it blunts the conclusion. The film, as Siegel wanted it, was to end with McCarthy on the highway unable to get anyone to listen to his story of the pod take-over and turning to the camera to shout, "You're next!" The moment would be a powerful warning, a psychological assault. However the conclusion of the film as it stands is still not totally affirmative, which is as it should be. We have seen the pods in action. We know they have already begun to spread. We wonder if human ef-



Scenes from *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, released by Allied Artists in 1956 and now in syndication for television through NTA. Top: The chilling pool table scene in which the horror is not visual but situational, and brilliantly enhanced by a musical passage from the score by Carmen Dragon. Here, Jack (King Donovan) and his wife Theodora (Carolyn Jones in background), show Miles (Kevin McCarthy) and Becky (Dana Wynter) a strange corpse which they have discovered which bears an uncomfortable resemblance to Jack. Bottom: Dana Wynter, King Donovan, Carolyn Jones and Kevin McCarthy are spellbound to discover bursting, developing seed pods growing in the greenhouse. They destroy them with the pitchfork, but more are hidden to take their place.



RIGHT: Miles and Becky attempt to escape the fate of a pod takeover. In the film they are constantly being driven into dark corners, forced to hide, their world threatened by the pods and reduced to constricted areas of existence. MIDDLE: In escaping from his own office where they were being forced to undergo the pod transformation Miles and Becky attempt to fool a police guard by acting blank and emotionless, only to give themselves away when they see a dog nearly run over by a car. Siegel vividly remembers a similar incident when he could not react to save a dog.

fort--the F. B. I. --can really have any effect. In addition, up to the moment Bissell picks up the phone, the possibility remains in the back of our minds that he may be a pod. In fact, the film has, at that point, so powerfully established a sense of mistrust for appearances that we are relieved with McCarthy when the doctor proves to be human. If there is any weakness in this it is that McCarthy does not appear, in the frame, to have this deep distrust of the doctor that we have developed.

A great deal of the power of the film comes in the visual presentation of the town of Santa Mira. Everything looks normal. Everyone acts normal even when they are not. Somehow, and Siegel himself isn't always sure how he managed it, there is something slightly off in the pod people. As one character, Wilma, puts it in talking about her Uncle Ira, there is no real emotion, just the pretense of it.

As we grow more absorbed in the film, we gradually begin to view the normal as ominous. That is, indeed, the basis of the theme of the film and a perfect wedding of style and content. Conformity, acceptance, control of emotions are the norm. It is this control, in fact, the very lack of feeling which is the horror of pod-ism. Pod-ism in the film involves the process of one's mind and thoughts being absorbed in a duplicate body which grows from a pod. The pod is emotionless and being so is also invulnerable. The parallel is clear but not heavy. Siegel fears that the pressures of existence are driving man into a shell, turning him into a vegetable creature who cannot feel, only give the pretense of feeling. That, to Siegel, is equivalent to being dead. In the film, one turns into a pod when he goes to sleep. Becoming a pod is like dying. Becoming a figurative pod is like being emotionally dead.

Again, a power of the film is its ambiguity. While being a pod is repugnant to Siegel and, in the film, to McCarthy, the argument for accepting pod-ism is strong.

First, there are many references to the forces in the world driving man into the defense of a pod existence.

McCarthy tells Wilma (Virginia Christine) that she is not mad. "Even these days," he says, "it's not as easy to go crazy as you think." The implication is that "these days" are frightening, fearful, something from which one might well wish to escape in madness.

Later, when McCarthy thinks the pod reports are examples of mass hysteria, he asks a psychiatrist, Danny Kaufmen (Larry Gates) what causes it. "Worry about what's going on in the world, probably," says Kaufmen.

When Becky Driscoll (Dana Wynter) and McCarthy begin to believe in the existence of the pods, she asks him for an explanation and he responds, "So much has been discovered in the past ten years."

Overtly, he is referring to scientific discoveries, even to the atomic bomb. Additionally, he is saying that the very existence of such threats is an overwhelming weight on man.

The one hint of feeling on the part of a pod is particularly enlightening in the film. McCarthy sneaks up to the house of his nurse and listens at the window. He hears the nurse, Sally (Jean Willes) tell someone where to put a pod for her baby. When the baby wakes up, she says, "there will be no more tears." Clearly, the pods are bringing comfort, a retreat from pain and life, a state of total emotional tranquility.

After hiding the night in McCarthy's office, he and Dana Wynter look out the window to see the town square. From their point of view it looks normal. The people look normal, but by now we distrust the normal as they do and we are confirmed. The trucks begin to pull out with pods,







taking them to other communities. The third truck goes to Milltown and the reference again is to the spread of a state of tranquility. Yet McCarthy says, "It's a malignant disease spreading through the whole country."

It is at this point that McCarthy makes the thematic statement central to the film: "Only when we have to fight to stay human do we realize how precious our humanity is." Humanity, he explains, drains away without our knowing it and we are suddenly dead.

It is in the conversation with the pod psychiatrist, Gates, that the ambiguity is most clearly expressed. In interviews (with the author and with Peter Bogdanovich in *Movie #15*) Siegel has shown that he has mixed feelings about the actual state of pod-ism, the masking, killing of emotion and subjugation of one's pain to a state of meaningless nirvana. Acceptance of pod-ism means the elimination of the fear of death and pain. As Gates points out, a pod has "no need for love, emotions." There is also no need for fear. Gates is reasonable, his argument rational and convincing. McCarthy's final response is that the world of the pods is one "where everyone is the same." For all its pain and fear, existence to him is worth fighting for. It is the only thing that makes his life meaningful. There is no essential difference between being a pod and being dead. And yet, death is inevitable and the pod state makes that death easier to accept and this life easier to bear. The dilemma drives McCarthy to the edge of madness for his whole world converts to pod-ism, just as one's real world dies around him. Santa Mira is an enclosed town, surrounded by mountains. When he arrives at the beginning, McCarthy says he feels like a stranger in his own country. Indeed, his friends, patients, colleagues and the girl he loves succumb to the inevitability of the pod takeover. It takes an extraordinary act of will and determination for McCarthy to stay awake. One has to fight for one's humanity. It is easy to become a pod.

The universality of the theme and the power of its presentation in the genre of a science fiction/horror context can be seen in two films by directors who very much admire Siegel. In Jean Luc Godard's *ALPHAVILLE* (1965) the threat is the computer, the pod-like state is that of giving one's self over to the mechanistic, the proscribed. In *ALPHAVILLE*, existence is too much for man and he turns his mind over to the computer. One scene in the Godard film in fact is directly taken from the Siegel film. Anna Karina and Eddie Constantine must show no emotion when they see a man killed. To show emotion is to indicate that you are not in the power of the computer. They reveal themselves and have a difficult time escaping. When McCarthy and Miss Wynter leave his office to try to escape, he tells her to look blank, show no emotion. She sees a dog about to be hit by a car and she reveals herself. It is, by the way, interesting to note that Siegel vividly remembers an incident more than twenty years ago when he saw a dog about to be hit by a car and could not get himself to react to save the animal.

The second director influenced by Siegel's film was Francois Truffaut. In *FAHRENHEIT 451* (1966), the people are literally tranquilized with drugs. They are dull, content. Books are forbidden because they create emotional responses which, as the pods informed us, are harmful. It is Montag's supreme effort to feel that allows him to reject his wife, promotion, security and, like McCarthy and Constantine, to spend his life running.

LEFT: Scenes from *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, scripted by Daniel Mainwaring, a former collaborator with Siegel and his personal friend. Top: On a premonition, Miles rushes back to Becky's house one night to discover a developing pod in the process of taking over her existence, hidden in the basement coal shed by Becky's father. Middle: Miles burns a seed pod hidden in the trunk of his car. The film, unlike most science fiction films, did not emphasize special effects, and spent only \$15,000, a relatively modest sum, in that department. Bottom: Miles visits Becky's Aunt Wilma (Virginia Christine) who seems to think that kindly Uncle Ira is not Uncle Ira, but an imposter. There is something slightly off in the pod people, there is no real emotion, just the pretense of it.

## Siegel fears that the pressures of existence are driving man into a shell.

The thematic goals of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* are beautifully expressed in content (the dialogue primarily) and style (the visual body).

The fact that one cannot escape from the pods is shown by Siegel in the way he has the pods hidden before they take over the minds of the humans. We see them in basements, automobile trunks, a greenhouse, and on a home pool table. That they cannot be destroyed is shown in McCarthy's attempts to do so. When he discovers the pods growing in the greenhouse, we are shown a ritual vampire killing. The camera is low in the point of view of the pod. We see McCarthy's anguished face as he drives the pitchfork down and leaves it like a stake through the heart. But it is not enough. Other pods appear in his trunk. He burns them in much the way we have seen so many monsters burning in films (only to rise again in a sequel). The pods are not traditional terrors. They are modern terrors not to be destroyed. There is no catharsis in the presentation of a monster being destroyed by love or religious ritual. It is the monsters which keep rising to prevail.

That he expects his warning not to be heeded is shown by Siegel in a variety of ways. Perhaps the most striking is that of the use of the small boy, Jimmy Grimaldi who we meet with McCarthy at the beginning of the picture. He runs down the road and is stopped by McCarthy who he informs that his mother is not his mother. McCarthy doesn't believe him. The world will not believe him and eventually the boy becomes a pod. Late in the film we also see McCarthy running down the road, searching for someone to tell that the people of Santa Mira are not really the people of Santa Mira (the very name of the town--mira in Spanish means "look"--calls attention to itself, cries to be understood, heeded). Like Jimmy, we know McCarthy will not be believed.

In the film McCarthy is constantly being driven into dark corners, forced to hide, his world threatened by the pods, reduced to constricted areas of existence. In one case, he and Dana Wynter have to hide in a closet in his office. The camera moves with them into the closet and through a small hole in the door we see a pod trun on a light outside. Later McCarthy and Miss Wynter are forced to hide in a cave in a hole which they cover with boards. They bury themselves. We see the pods rush over them. In effect, the places to run are constantly reduced and we suffer the confinement of choices with the protagonists.

The most striking sequence in the film for me is that in which McCarthy, having finally escaped from Santa Mira, suddenly finds himself on a highway with hundreds of cars passing him, unwilling to listen to him, unwilling to save themselves. The setting is dark with McCarthy frantic in a sea of machines, people hiding within their machines, perhaps in the first step of becoming pods.

As he stands on the highway, a truck passes with the names of various cities on it. In the truck, McCarthy finds the pods and we know they are being taken to the big cities whose names we saw on the side of the truck. We feel as hopeless in the face of the image as McCarthy.

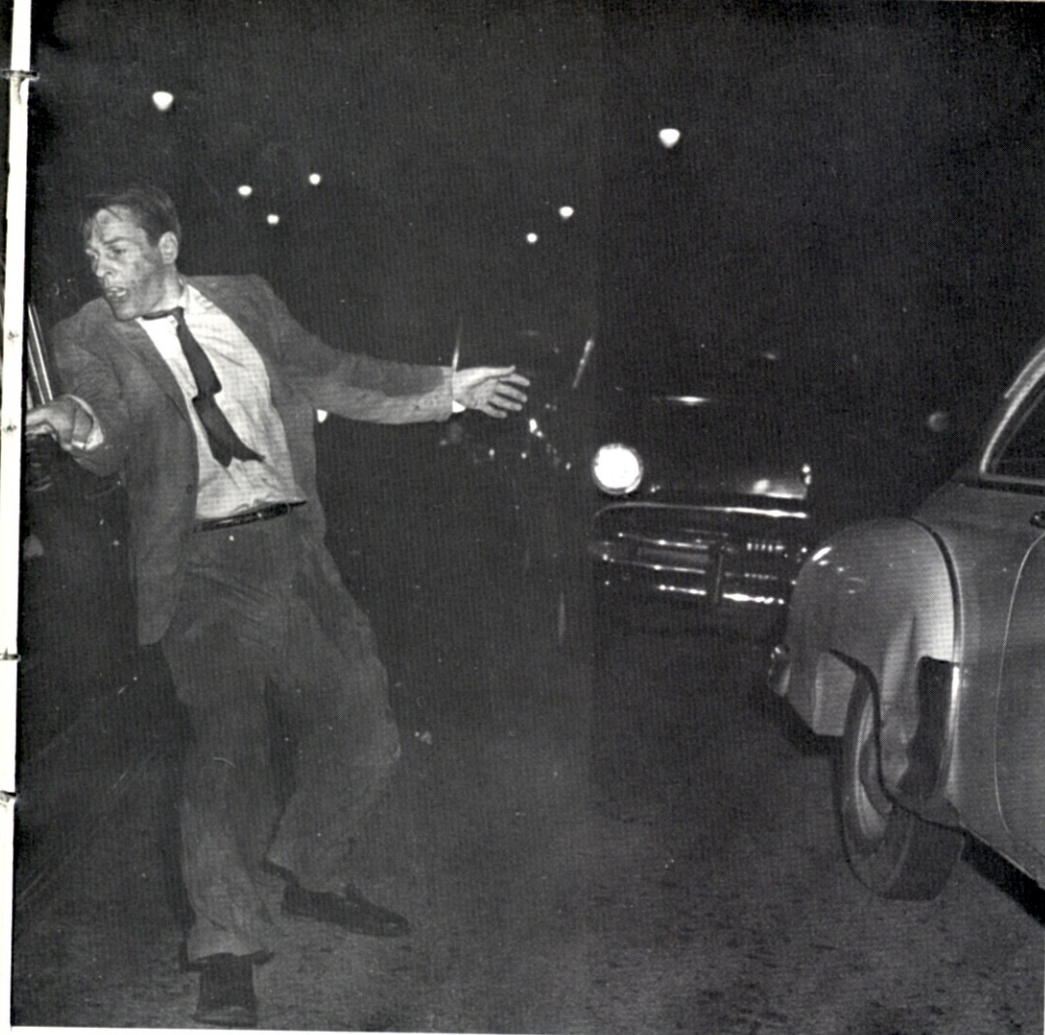
Finally, an important contribution to the total power of the film lies in the performances. McCarthy's growing frenzy combined with his determination never falter. A less restrained actor might well have been a disaster. The other actors have the burden of appearing normal while at the same time conveying the impression that they are not. It is in the performances that this ambiguity is carried. Siegel seldom relies on low key lighting, ominous shadows or radical camera angles or shock cutting to carry the terror of the situation. It is in the very matter-of-factness of presentation that the film holds its power and it is Siegel's handling of actors which contributes considerably to the film which Leslie Halliwell in *The Filmgoer's Companion* calls "the most subtle film in the science-fiction cycle, with no visual horror whatever."



# SIEGEL On *Invasion Of The Body Snatchers*







People without being vegetables are becoming vegetables. I don't know what the answer is except an awareness of it. That's what makes this picture important.

Although *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* (1956) is considered one of the most intelligent science fiction films ever made, it is unique in Siegel's 28-film career. He has not directed another science fiction film nor seriously considered doing one. He did, however, direct two episodes of the *TWILIGHT ZONE* television series, "Uncle Simon" (11/15/63) starring Sir Cedric Hardwicke and Constance Ford, and "The Self-Improvement of Salvatore Ross" (1/17/64) starring Don Gordon. Both episodes were written by Rod Serling.

Of all his films, *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* is the one most central to Siegel's thematic interests. It is the film about which he most frequently talks when discussing his attitudes toward life, and the term "pod"—a reference to the pod creatures of the film—is part of his normal vocabulary.

The film was initially the idea of Walter Wan-ger, the producer, who had read Jack Finney's novel (originally published as a magazine series) and brought the idea to Siegel who immediately liked it. Siegel got Daniel Mainwaring to write the screenplay, Ted Haworth as art director and Kevin McCarthy as star.

The following interview with Siegel was obtained while gathering material for a book on Siegel and his work. As background, Siegel was born in Chicago but moved frequently with his family throughout his youth. At one point, he attended Cambridge University when his family moved to Europe where his father was sent to manage an American business in Paris. At the age of 19, Siegel got a job on an ocean liner, made his way across the United States and found himself in Los Angeles where he managed to get an interview at Warner Bros with Hal Wallis. Wallis gave him a job at the bottom of the editing echelon. Through the 1930s Siegel worked as a film librarian, film editor, montage director and second unit director on dozens of films including *SERGEANT YORK*, *SARATOGA TRUNK*, and *THE ROARING TWENTIES*. For much of his time at Warner (he left in 1945) he worked under Byron Haskin.

Siegel became a director in 1945 with *THE VERDICT* and has, among his directing credits, *RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11*, *BABY FACE NELSON*, *MADIGAN*, *TWO MULES FOR SISTER SARAH*, *HELL IS FOR HEROES*, *COOGAN'S BLUFF*, *DIRTY HARRY*, *THE KILLERS* and, my own favorite, *THE BEGUILLED*.

**CFQ:** It has been reported that Sam Peckinpah wrote a script for or part of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. Is that true?

**SIEGEL:** No. Sam was my assistant on that picture, as he was on several of my pictures including *RIOT IN CELL BLOCK 11* and *PRIVATE HELL 36*. Sam may have made suggestions, but he didn't write any of the film. Sam did act in the film, however. He was one of the pods, the meter reader in Dana Wynter's basement.

**CFQ:** The film has a frame, a prologue and epilogue which shows Kevin McCarthy being brought into a hospital to tell his story and then later, at the end, getting the doctor to believe him when some pods are found. According to



**LEFT:** Scenes from *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* based on the novel by Jack Finney as serialized in "Colliers" magazine in 1955. **Top:** Miles vainly tries to warn passersby on the highway of the pod menace in Santa Mira. Siegel wanted to end the film here, with McCarthy turning toward the camera and shouting hysterically: "You're next!" **Bottom:** Becky falls asleep for only a matter of minutes in the mine shaft and becomes a pod.



RIGHT: Scenes from *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, director Don Siegel's film for producer Walter Wanger. Kevin McCarthy and Dana Wynter are two lovers faced with the threat of a world without emotion. An important contribution to the total power of the film lies in the performances, McCarthy's growing frenzy combined with his determination never falter. A less restrained actor might well have been a disaster. McCarthy had acted for Siegel in *THE ANNAPOLIS STORY*.

Daniel Mainwaring you were very much against the frame.

SIEGEL: Very much against it. Danny wrote it because they told him he had to.

CFQ: "They?"

SIEGEL: The studio.

CFQ: Did you direct the prologue and epilogue?

SIEGEL: Yes. They were going to shoot it anyway and I decided that since it would be in the picture, I might as well do it as well as I could.

CFQ: What don't you like about the prologue and epilogue?

SIEGEL: First of all, it lets you know right away that something unusual is going on. If you start, as I wanted to, with McCarthy arriving in the town of Santa Mira, it reveals itself slowly, we understand why McCarthy can't readily accept the terrible thing that appears to be happening. And the dramatic impact of the ending is reduced with the epilogue. I wanted to end it with McCarthy on the highway turning to the camera and saying, "You're next!" Then, boom, the lights go up. In the final version, however, we go back to the hospital... and that's after the fact.

CFQ: The film is still extremely popular. According to NTA, which distributes it, it is among the most requested films on television. Can't the opening and close be cut or is my question naive?

SIEGEL: Many people do cut that frame, those sequences, when they show it. Every few days the picture is run somewhere, some underground theater. And the tacked on opening and closing are removed.

CFQ: Do you think anything else hurt the film?

SIEGEL: Yes. Allied Artists had an old-fashioned credo that horror pictures couldn't have humor. I had a great deal of humor in the picture and though they cut out a lot, they didn't totally succeed.

CFQ: What was the basis of the humor they cut out?

SIEGEL: I felt that the idea of pods growing into a likeness of a person would strike the characters as preposterous. I wanted to play it that way, with the characters not taking the threat seriously. For example, if you told me now that there was a pod in my likeness in the other room, I would joke about it. However, when I opened the door and saw the pod, the full shock and horror would hit me and the fun would be gone. I wanted the people in the film to behave like normal people. That does come through in the film.

CFQ: As in the barbecue scene. King Donovan, Carolyn Jones, McCarthy and Dana Wynter have an outdoor barbecue even after they have accepted mentally that something is terribly wrong. Only when they see the pod do they panic.

SIEGEL: Precisely.

CFQ: The film contains surprisingly few special effects, surprising because your background at Warner Bros was in montage and effects.

SIEGEL: Well, special effects were relatively unimportant in *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. We spent about \$15,000 on special effects, a very small amount. Instead of doing what so many science fiction and horror films do... spend all their money on special effects and put poor actors on the screen... we concentrated on the performers. The main thing about the picture, however, was that it was about something and that's rare.

CFQ: It's about...

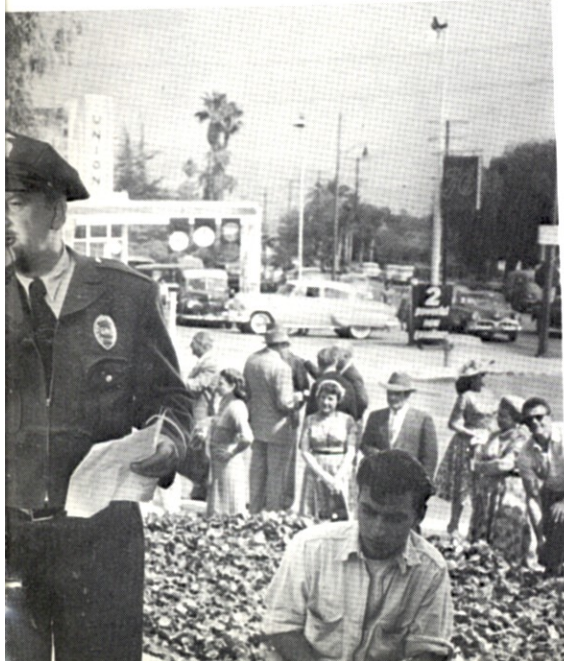
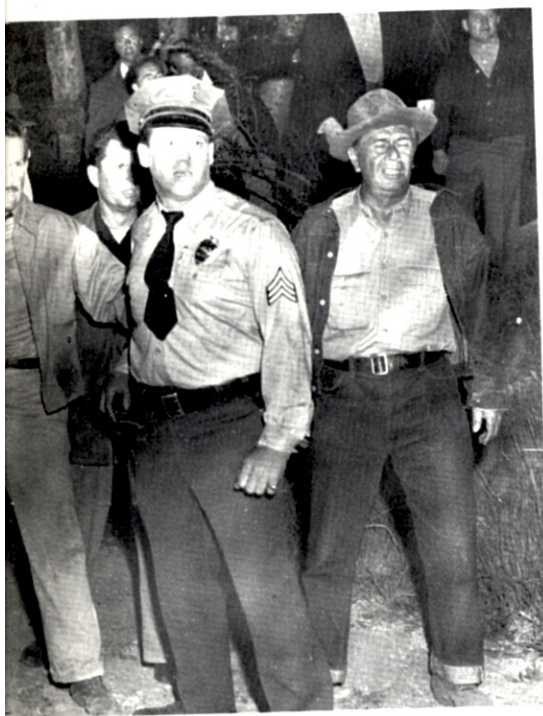
SIEGEL: Pods. Not those that come from outer space, vegetables from outer space. People are pods. Many of my associates are certainly pods. They have no feelings. They exist, breathe, sleep. To be a pod means that you have no passion, no anger, the spark has left you.

CFQ: Your spokesman for the pods is a psychiatrist played by Larry Gates. A psychiatrist in the real world usually represents sanity and...

SIEGEL: Having the psychiatrist as spokesman







for the pods was a conscious choice. Once you become a pod you believe in it and he really believes in it, is able to speak with authority, knowledge about how it is preferable to be a pod instead of a human.

CFQ: Yes, you allow him to make a frighteningly strong case for accepting pod-ism.

SIEGEL: Well, I think there's a very strong case for being a pod. These pods, who get rid of pain, ill health and mental disturbance are, in a sense, doing good. It happens to leave you with a very dull world, but that, by the way, my dear friend, is the world that most of us live in. It's the same as people who welcome going into the army or prison. There's regimentation, a lack of having to make up your mind, face decisions.

CFQ: So one point of the picture is that being a pod relieves you but gives you no challenge. To be a pod is the same as not existing.

SIEGEL: That's right.

CFQ: In *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, there is no real physical threat from the pods. The threat is from sleep. Sleep is the villain. To fall asleep is to allow the pods to take your mind.

SIEGEL: Yes. It's a very frightening thing to face, the physical challenge of keeping someone awake. The suspense created is very great because, obviously, we'll all have to sleep. It's like when people suffer from chronic insomnia as I do. They are afraid to go to sleep. One reason for this is that they fear they won't wake up. There is a parallel to this in the film.

CFQ: When McCarthy meets Dana Wynter on his return to Santa Mira, he invites her to go somewhere with him. He jokingly says, "It's summer, the moon is full and I know a bank where the wild thyme grows." It is one of many motifs picked up and played with from more traditional horror films. When McCarthy does encounter the pods, he tries all the traditional ways to kill them, though it is not underscored. In the greenhouse, you made a special point of having the camera down low when he plunges a pitchfork into the pod, like driving a stake through the heart. And later he tries to burn the pods placed in his trunk.

SIEGEL: But more appear.

CFQ: The only thing he can do is run and even that...

SIEGEL: ...he can't do. He tries to get the police on his side but he discovers that the police are pods. He tries to call Washington but discovers the telephone operator is a pod. He can only try to escape.

CFQ: We get quite far into the film before we and McCarthy are absolutely sure the pods exist.

SIEGEL: That's right. We delayed it as long as we could because from that moment on, it was just an out-and-out chase, the whole town against this one person who isn't a pod and this girl who isn't one but will be. What I thought was quite delicious was the fact that pods feel no passion. So after he comes back to her in the cave and kisses her to keep her awake, a delicious, non-pod kiss, he knows she's a pod because she's a limp fish.

CFQ: By the way, do you like the title of the picture?

SIEGEL: No. *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* was the idea of some studio pod. The title I wanted was *SLEEP NO MORE*.

CFQ: Referring to Hamlet's soliloquy on suicide?

SIEGEL: Yes.

CFQ: The reason McCarthy leaves her in the cave is because he hears music, Brahms I be-

lieve, although the script originally called for Mexican music. In any case, it makes him think it is being played by real people because pods have no need for music.

SIEGEL: And he finds they are pods waiting for the weather forecast while they load more pods on a truck. I frequently try to mislead the audience a little.

CFQ: That's especially jarring since the doctor, McCarthy, has gotten to the point where he trusts almost no one. At the end, this distrust pushes him to the brink of madness.

SIEGEL: Well, there he is on the highway, trying to get someone to listen to his warning and no one will listen. It would probably drive you crazy. Remember he spins against a truck, tries to climb in and sees that it is filled with pods going to all the different cities marked on the side of the truck. That's when he wheels around and yells "You're next!" Because you are next. I don't care where you are, whether you're sitting in a theatre or reading a magazine, whether you are in the United States or another country. There are pods and they are going to get you.

CFQ: At one point when the pods are being disbursed from trucks in the town square, we hear that one is for the people of Milltown. Was this one of the jokes, a comment of some kind on tranquilizing ones self into pod-ism?

SIEGEL: Well, that was in the script. It's possible we meant it as a gag, but I don't remember.

CFQ: Everything about the film is constricting, closed in on itself. We see little Jimmy Grimaldi running down the road away from his pod mother at the beginning of the picture and later we see McCarthy running in the same kind of panic down the same road when he is pursued by the pods.

SIEGEL: That was done quite deliberately. I like that. In many of my pictures, I'll start with some action and later end with a related action, an action related in style.

CFQ: Then there are some intangible things that make the film particularly chilling. For example, Uncle Ira played by Tom Fadden is particularly frightening although he does nothing but mow the lawn while the girl whispers that he is not her Uncle Ira. Now the camera position and lighting are important, but there's something else.

SIEGEL: Perhaps his face. The fact that he's older than he looks might have done something. I remember working with him on the scene and being very pleased with the way it came off. Part of it was a strange little smile he gave.

CFQ: Yes. It is normal and yet something is wrong. People are not who you think them to be and, ultimately, your greatest enemy is your own pod self. There are many references to fear of one's self. It is especially striking when King Donovan goes off with Carolyn Jones and says to McCarthy "Look out for yourself." It is a bit of commonplace banter, but we know that it is chillingly literal. Ultimately it is our own tendency toward pod-ism which we must overcome.

SIEGEL: Yes, I don't think you're reading anything that isn't there.

CFQ: As far as McCarthy being a doctor...

SIEGEL: The town is like a cancer growth. The town, like a section of your body, is ill, and it's going to spread, the way, many times, political ideas spread.

CFQ: There are some parallels in the film to Howard Hawks' *THE THING*, which came before *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* and dealt with an emotionless vegetable creature from outer space that lived off humans and, more recently, to *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* in which the metaphor becomes most stark and those who die become pods consuming the living and...

SIEGEL: ...there was a television series, *THE INVADERS* which was along the same lines.

CFQ: That's right. Creatures from outer space replacing humans, and if I might and, it's the theme of Godard's *ALPHAVILLE* in which people become podlike and give themselves over to a computer. Have you ever seen the film?

SIEGEL: No.

CFQ: What we come back to is that there is no hope in your film.

SIEGEL: People without being vegetables are becoming vegetables. I don't know what the answer is except an awareness of it. That's what makes a picture like *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* important.

LEFT: Top: Director Don Siegel poses with Dana Wynter and Kevin McCarthy during filming on the set of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. While making the film Siegel, as a joke, put one of the pods under Dana Wynter's hotel room bed. She found it and became hysterical. The cast, it seems, had become totally absorbed in the story. Middle: Miles escapes the townspeople at the highway. "Wait. Let him go. They'll never believe him," says the meter reader, played by Sam Peckinpah (third from left). There is some controversy over what contribution, if any, Peckinpah made toward scripting the film. Bottom: The Sheriff (Ralph Dumke) distributes pods to waiting families in the town square. Notice the blank appearance of the pod people seated next to him.



# CHARLEMAGNE PRODUCTIONS

## Christopher Lee and Anthony Nelson Keys discuss their newly formed production company.

Set in modern times, *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT* is likely to stand out as a milestone in the film career of Christopher Lee, for not only is it his 111th film and 21st film with Peter Cushing, it is his first for the newly formed independent British film company, Charlemagne Productions Ltd, a company formed by Christopher Lee and producer Anthony Nelson Keys. Just for the record the company, Charlemagne, is named after the Frankish king (742-814) with whom Mr. Lee's family can claim ancestral associations on his mother's side.

*NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT* is the first of several projects to be made for the big screen by Charlemagne. Others in preparation include *PORTRAIT OF BARBARA* from an original story and screenplay by Robin Squires, *BURY HIM DARKLY* by John Blackburn (author of *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT*) and perhaps the two most exciting projects of all, *TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER* and *THE HAUNTING OF TOBY JUGG*, both written by famed author Dennis Wheatley, sales of which have run into millions all over the world.

In *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT* Christopher Lee stars as Special Branch Chief Bingham of Scotland Yard, involved in the investigation of the deaths of prominent citizens who are all trustees of a very wealthy charitable organization. Peter Cushing plays Bingham's friend, Ashley, a pathologist who bays his spirits, aids his investigations and provides him with needed medical knowledge and expertise. The film also features Diana Dors, Georgia Brown, Keith Barron, Fulton MacKay and Duncan Lamont, and is directed by Peter Sasdy, who did *TASTE THE BLOOD OF DRACULA* with Christopher Lee for Hammer Films. Charlemagne is producing the film for the Rank Organisation, Anthony Nelson Keys producer, from a screenplay by Brian Hayles.

*NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT* went before the cameras on April 17th, and it was exactly a week later, on a very cold and windy Monday morning, that I travelled to Pinewood Studios, which nestles in the rural countryside of Buckinghamshire, to visit the set. Pinewood is England's largest film studio, something I found out for myself after loosing my way once and spending ten minutes wandering around in bitter cold winds before I finally reached the two new sound stages, L and M, where shooting of the film was in progress.

Making my way through the reception area, which earlier that day had been taken over by the unit and transformed into part of a hospital, I finally arrived on the set. The set in use, and on which the shooting was taking place, was Bingham's office while to one side was a private communications/computer room staffed by two police officers, the two rooms being connected by a door. Peter Sasdy was directing his actors in a scene in which Peter Cushing is invited into Christopher Lee's office, and after three or four rehearsals the shot was finally filmed. Sasdy decided on a new camera angle and thus having a short time to spare I took the opportunity to chat with, not only

Peter and Christopher, but also Anthony Nelson Keys, the producer of the film. Just prior to being called back for the final shooting on that particular set for the day, Christopher and Tony were kind enough to pose for a few photographs and I must admit it caused more than a few laughs to see them "hamming it up" together before any of the photos could be taken.

When shooting had been completed for the day I was invited back to the small, but very comfortable, office which had been handed over to Charlemagne Productions for the duration of the picture. I was joined in the office by Christopher, Tony, my photographer Peter Nicholson and Dennison Thornton, the unit publicist on the film who had been very helpful to us, not only on this picture but also on *DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN* which starred Vincent Price. As Christopher Lee and Anthony Nelson Keys were making themselves comfortable on a settee, I set up my tape recorder and began to put questions to them about the new production company they had formed:

CFQ: Could you tell us how and why Charlemagne Productions was formed?

KEYS: I've tried for a long time to put Chris in something different and we talked about this for some time. I read this book by John Blackburn (*NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT*) and I liked it. So I sent it to Chris saying, what about you? Chris said yes, very much. Then, all of a sudden, I read another one by Blackburn called *BURY HIM DARKLY*, which I liked. So I sent that one to Chris and Chris had one sent to him called *PORTRAIT OF BARBARA* which he sent to me and by the time we had talked about the books and the scripts we said let's get together and make a company--hence Charlemagne Productions.

LEE: You see, both of us--and I'm now going to give us both a pat on the back because I don't believe in mock modesty--both of us, individually and collectively, have enormous experience in the business of making pictures, which I think people are apt to forget is the prime reason for the cinema today: making pictures. Other people sell them. We make them. Tony has as much experience as any producer I should think in existence in producing pictures, and after one hundred and ten pictures I can say I'm fairly experienced in the business of portraying people in pictures. Now we feel, not in competition with anybody else or as a rival to anybody else, but we would like to make the pictures we want to make, and the subjects we choose.

Obviously, we are not going to go outside the area in which we are, frankly, experts, because we are experts. I mean all the most successful Hammer pictures--and this is a fact--have been produced by Tony and performed by me. I'm not saying we are the only two people responsible, as this is not true, but by virtue of our experience in these films and the knowledge we have gained from these pictures we think--we believe--we know how best to make this kind of film, as well as anyone else, let's put it that way. If we

can make the pictures we want to make with that expertise and knowledge, we think we can make successful films. It's as simple as that. We're not trying to beat anybody else at the same game. We're not trying to take anybody else on.

KEYS: There's no competition. All we want to do is subjects we like--but that doesn't always work. Obviously the distributors and the people who put up the money have some say in it, but so far we've got pictures that we believe they will like.

CFQ: Who makes the final decision as to who exactly will appear in each film?

KEYS: It's a joint decision.

LEE: Well, we start the first one with me being the actor. It doesn't mean in the future when Charlemagne goes on making pictures, which we hope it will do, that I will be in every one, far from it.

KEYS: (laughing) You'll have to give us a rest sometimes. We can't have too many board meetings.

LEE: I might be producing one, you see.

KEYS: (laughing) Oh, yes?

LEE: Obviously, one has to start the ball rolling, if you like, in the most obvious way and the obvious way is to pay Tony to produce because of his knowledge and for me to perform because of mine and it's a collective thing entirely. It's not just Tony Keys and Christopher Lee. There are other people involved as well.

KEYS: You have to try and sell a picture on a package deal. The package on this one was Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Tony Keys, possibly Diana Dors and director Peter Sasdy. That was the conception I gave to the Rank Organisation to start with and we moved from there. They said yes, and away we go, and we'll just have to keep our fingers crossed.

LEE: Basically, one is assuming, and hoping, that people will go on saying yes to the same sort of proposition because everything these days is based on a package of some sort. The company, the property, the script, the people involved, the performers and the director.

CFQ: Now that you have set up your own production company, will you be trying to get away from the Hammer image while still making pictures in the same field?

KEYS: You see, you can't get away from the Hammer image. I was with Hammer for about twelve years. I was assistant producer, general manager of their studios, I was a producer for them. There are still a lot of people who still think I'm with Hammer.

LEE: I made a lot of pictures for Hammer and a lot of people thought I was under contract to Hammer, which I never was. It's not a question of the

At right: Christopher Lee and former Hammer Films producer Anthony Nelson Keys "hamming it up" on the set of *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT*, the first film project of their newly formed Charlemagne Productions, for release by the Rank Organisation.







At left: Christopher Lee as Special Branch Chief Bingham in his latest film *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT*, the first film project of Lee's own production company, Charlemagne Productions.

Hammer image because Hammer has made their films successfully. So have other people: AIP, Tigon, Universal before the war. It's a question of making pictures in the same field, in the same area, which is enormous. There is plenty of room for all, as they say, and it isn't a question of a Hammer image. Somebody may say one day that Hammer is trying to make films like Charlemagne. Neither of us are stuck with an image with a particular company. People say you collaborated, the two of you, with great success in pictures that you did for Hammer. Now we're simply saying, as Dennison puts it -- declaration of independence -- we make our own.

KEYS: (laughing) Who plays Abe Lincoln?

LEE: You know, that reminds me of the only time in my life I ever met Groucho Marx at Universal Studios. It's a perfectly true story, I was in the make up room with Bud Westmore and I was being made up and in walked my hero. I was playing a part in the Alfred Hitchcock television show and I was dressed all in black, black frock coat, black trousers, black wig and white face and, I suppose you could say, I escalated out of the chair with great speed and there was my hero standing in front of me and I didn't know what to say. I just put my hand out and said: "Mr. Marx, I'm sure you've heard this a thousand times but for me this is a great moment." And it really was. He looked at me, and there was a long silence, and I thought, oh God I'm going to be the recipient of one of his devastating remarks for which he's world famous, and I thought, now what's coming? He shook my hand, he looked me up and down and he said: "I bet you've played Abe Lincoln many times," and walked out. I've never forgotten it, my only meeting with the great man.

CFQ: Will Charlemagne have any direct connections with the distribution and publicity angles of the films you make, after they have been completed?

LEE: Well we pick the subject which we think will have the greatest appeal, obviously, to the distributor and the people who are putting up the money, and through that, obviously to the public. Do you see what I mean? We have the say in picking the subject. They have the say in saying if you can make it, basically, distribution, they have the say, publicity is a collaboration.

KEYS: Once a picture is in their hands for distribution, if they want to spend a lot of money on advertising then they will come back to us and say this is their publicity campaign, do we have any suggestions, and they will tell us what they are going to spend, say for example, thirty thousand on publicity and advertising. I'm not going to say no, and I don't suppose Chris would say no either. It has to come off the top anyway, from any profits, but it can be worth it.

LEE: Incidentally, going back to your remark about Hammer. The first telegram we received on the production of this picture was from Michael Carreras wishing us very great success with our picture. Now if Hammer really thought for one minute we were taking the bread out of their mouths, we certainly wouldn't have got that telegram. Of course, we do feel that with the subjects we've got, and the one we are making, we can make without the Hammer trappings, if you like, and we all know what they are and very successful they are. Don't get me wrong. We don't necessarily need that kind of approach and those trappings in this story. It doesn't mean to say that in another story we won't pick, say, a

Gothic tale.

KEYS: Well, *BURY HIM DARKLY* is in that line.

Actually, Rank asked me when I took *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT* to them, was I going to direct it myself and they were quite happy that I should do so, and I said, no, I have no intention of doing this. I believe that as this is the first for Charlemagne we should get it off the ground, get the company going, and then I might. You've got to have a very good A. P. and as I can't get my brother who's the number one A. P. in the business, I'll be doing the producing on this one. If I could get my brother, then I would direct and there will probably come a time when Chris will do the same, please God providing someone puts up the money.

LEE: That's what it all boils down to. I think everyone knows that. Whether you ever get the money to make the picture. And it all depends on how much they think is the right figure, because it bounces about so much from one month to the next, one year to the next. I remember three years ago people saying to me it's no good going to such-and-such a distributor unless you've got a picture of at least three-quarters of a million pounds. Well look at you, with a cheap picture, not on your life! Next thing we know is that you go to a distributor, he asks you how much you are going to make it for, a hundred thousand pounds is the limit, where in five years time they may say three million, although that's very unlikely, but it does change.

KEYS: It isn't the amount of money you are spending that makes a good picture. You have to take the budget and balance it against the subject you've got. Now you could spend more money on this particular picture in certain ways, but I don't say it will make it any better or more people are going to pay at the box office. I want to make good entertainment. I want people to go in on a Monday night and come out and say you must go to the Odeon, there's a marvellous film there, a great evening's entertainment.

LEE: I think also with a film of this kind and the way we're making it, I not only think, I believe, we will get the audience that will go anyway to see a picture which he produces and in which I perform alongside Peter Cushing, and you know that audience fortunately, from our point of view, numbers millions, ready-made, world wide. I think that with this kind of picture we will appeal to an even wider audience of people who perhaps wouldn't go and see, say, a Gothic picture made by Hammer because they say I don't like that kind of film, but this is much more, if I may say so and a terrible name-drop, a Hitchcock type of film, and it's modern, and also it's not entirely unbelievable, far from it in fact. You've got a built in audience of millions anyway with this type of picture, which is made at a slightly higher level of involvement and belief and you will appeal to the people who would normally say, I wouldn't go and see that kind of picture.

CFQ: Christopher has said in the past that Dennis Wheatley's books cover a huge canvas and would be very expensive to make. Was this talked over before you decided to make preparations for *TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER*?

KEYS: Well, you have to cut the cloth according to what you can do. *TO THE DEVIL A DAUGHTER* is set in the south of France, but it's no need to be. It will still give you a very exciting thriller, chase, who-dun-it with some Black Magic at the end of it. Chris will play the Canon, and although the Canon in the book is written as a round, bald headed, tubby man, there's no need for that. This is the part for Christopher in my opinion and this is the part he'd like to play. But I've got to get the script written. I've got to get the script

submitted. And they may or may not like it.

*BURY HIM DARKLY* is slightly different. Here again, Chris will appear in it but not Peter. Not because I wouldn't like Peter to play in it -- I adore Peter -- but there isn't the right part for him, and it's no good teaming them together unless you get a subject, like *NOTHING BUT THE NIGHT*, where you can put them.

CFQ: Since we've brought up the subject of Dennis Wheatley's books, you were associated with *THE DEVIL'S BRIDE* for Hammer. Were you staidified with the final film?

KEYS: Well, the only criticism I have with regards to *THE DEVIL'S BRIDE* is that I wish *ROSEMARY'S BABY* had come out first, because *ROSEMARY'S BABY* had practically no censorship. Now if I had made *THE DEVIL'S BRIDE* afterwards, I could have included a Black Mass. You are stuck with doing the best you can, which is not a true Black Mass. Today you can put on a Black Mass which looks like a Black Mass and that is the only regret I've got. You just do the best you can.

CFQ: As you mention censorship, did you ever feel somewhat tied down at the time you were making films like *THE DEVIL'S BRIDE* by censorship restrictions?

KEYS: Well, on all the pictures one has made in the past, you know how far you could go with these sort of things, but I don't believe horror is blood you see, that's not horror to me. I don't believe nudity is horror as such. There has been a lot of success for pictures which have nudity and a lot of blood, but horror is what you build up in peoples' minds in the theatre -- what's going to happen next -- don't go near the door because something has happened there before and you don't know what it is. In *THE BIRDS*, for example, you see this woman sitting in front of the schoolhouse and crow after crow comes down, and this is great. But there again, how many of us are Hitchcock?

CFQ: Which film of yours have you found the most satisfying?

KEYS: They've all been satisfying. I won't say I haven't been disappointed in some things, but there has been such variety.

The first one I produced was a pirate picture called *THE PIRATES OF BLOOD RIVER*, which was the eighth highest grossing picture of the year. Chris was in it, and surprisingly there was no boat, as such, in the picture at all. It was set in the Caribbean and made entirely in this country, in fact, in the Black Park just down the road from here. We had a boat sailing in the credit titles, we had a captain's cabin and we had a painted boat on the lake out here, but it was all an illusion, that's the point.

I enjoy them all. There were some I made, when I was resident producer, which I would like not to have made, but I wasn't disappointed when I made them. As a resident producer you have to take the rough with the smooth. I made four right after the other, one year -- *DRACULA*, *PRINCE OF DARKNESS*, *RASPUTIN*, *THE MAD MONK*, *PLAGUE OF THE ZOMBIES* and *THE REPTILE* -- but then, it was made for a pattern that one and three went out together and two and four.

CFQ: We were talking about publicity earlier. What, to you, is good publicity?

KEYS: Well, if the audience on a Monday night like it, then that's the best publicity in the world. That's the one I like. The critics, obviously, say what they feel, but regardless of that, if the audience comes out on a Monday night and they've enjoyed it, it's the word-of-mouth which I think is great. Publicity isn't everything, but it helps. You can't sell anything without publicity. You've got to tell people what it's all about, you must do, or they won't even go on Monday night.



# FILM REVIEWS

## WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?

...makes one wonder what Val Lewton could have done with the splendid premise of living out childhood fantasies in real life...

**WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?** An American International Pictures Release. 12/71. In Color by Movielab. 89 minutes. Produced by Samuel Z. Arkoff and James H. Nicholson. Executive producer, Louis M. Heyward. Associate producer, John Pellatt. Directed by Curtis Harrington. Director of photography, Desmond Dickinson, B.S.C. Screenplay by Robert Bles and James Sangster. Additional dialog and original story by David Osborn. Music composed and conducted by Kenneth V. Jones. Film edited by Tristram Cones. Art director, George Provis. Sound, Ken Ritchie.

Auntie Roo ..... Shelley Winters  
Christopher ..... Mark Lester  
Katy ..... Chloe Franks  
Mr. Benton ..... Ralph Richardson  
Inspector Willoughby ..... Lionel Jeffries  
The Pigman ..... Hugh Griffith  
Miss Henley ..... Rosalie Crutchley  
Dr. Mason ..... Pat Heywood  
Clarine ..... Judy Cornwall  
Albie ..... Michael Gothard  
Angela ..... Jacqueline Cowper  
Peter ..... Richard Beaumont

Curtis Harrington's film, finally released theatrically, is the lackluster tale of Auntie Roo (Shelley Winters), an American widow—her husband, a magician, seems to have pulled the ultimate in disappearing acts—living in England in the 1920s. Also sharing her home are two rather malicious servants and the rotted remains of her daughter, Kathryn, who had died some years earlier in 1913. Auntie Roo decides to replace the latter by kidnapping a local orphan named, coincidentally, Katy (Chloe Franks). But Katy's brother Christopher (Mark Lester) escapes from the orphanage to interfere in the plan under the remarkable belief that Auntie Roo is the wicked witch of the Hansel and Gretel story. This brother-and-sister-team finally contrive to answer

the title question of the film by burning Auntie Roo alive, right in the middle of her cold storage room.

Harrington's film is wildly disappointing. Structurally it is chaotic; the narrative emphasis abruptly switches in the middle of the film from Auntie Roo to the two children, and the movie never recovers from the resulting confusion. The acting is broad and seemingly undisciplined by Harrington; several of Shelley Winters' scenes are simply embarrassing to endure. Mark Lester, an obnoxiously precocious lad, replays his **SUDDEN TERROR** role. Moments of relief are mercifully provided by some tough veterans: Lionel Jeffries as the local Inspector; Hugh Griffith as the wild-eyed, Fagin-ish butcher aptly named Pigman; and Sir Ralph Richardson as a liquor-drenched fraudulent medium Auntie Roo has employed for many years for his trumped-up ability to communicate with the dead Kathryn (the maid in the closet does the voice). Ultimately their work brings little aid to the film; it is a measure of its failure in that these actors are enjoyable more for their screen presence than for the characters they are playing.

Harrington's suspense devices, on which the first half of the film especially rests, are rather tepidly executed. With the exception of a pre-credit sequence and a later visit by the children to a dusty room overflowing with the magician's relics, both of which are passably effective scenes, the rest of the shocks are either dully traditional (chirping red-eyed rats in unexpected places) or gimmicky (Kathryn's brittle corpse is introduced chillingly in the pre-credit sequence via a fine Wellesian extended "take," but is dragged around endlessly by Auntie Roo for the remainder of the film).

In fact, there is little beyond the initial scene to recommend in **WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?** (the film is being advertised under a more grammatically correct title than what appears on

LEFT: Scenes from **THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY** in release from Paramount Pictures. Joel (Perry King) terrorizes his sister Norah (Shirley Maclaine) and her two children, Carrie (Lisa Kohane) and Peter (David Ellicott). The film is an allegory of contemporary race relations, about elemental hostilities between an oppressed minority and its white oppressors. Both it and **THE OTHER** are variations on a classic theme—good characters taken over by evil spirits.

screen). Several of the scenes are cut well, particularly the fluid meshing of the flashback sequences into the main narrative. Also notable are a limited number of drastically offsetting overhead shots put to intelligent use. Obvious limitations of budget provide only quick stabs at the physical recreation of the early '20s, never equalling Harrington's beautifully evoked 30s atmosphere accomplished in **WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?** Desmond Dickinson's photography is murky in spots and undistinguished at best.

The largest disappointment to be mourned is Harrington's performance as director. His career zoomed off with **NIGHT TIDE** (1963), one of a select few of truly strange American films, then sank from view in a sea of AIP-and-others programmers before surging to the surface again with **GAMES** (1967), a film that covered its heavy debt to Clouzot's **DIABOLIQUE** (1954) quite well. Since then he has not produced anything of merit in his see-saw career until his most recent **WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN?** One sincerely hopes that such an overall failure like **WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?** is only another fluke in his growing canon, like Gordon Hessler's recent, deplorable production of **MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE**.

I find the germ of the idea for the second half of the film, the Hansel and Gretel motif, quite fascinating. The idea does not work at all here due largely to the failure of Harrington and his screenwriters, Robert Bles and James Sangster, to develop any deep and pervading quality of childhood mystique, the only basis on which the idea could survive. Since it is impossible for us to imagine even for a second that Auntie Roo could be the witch in question, or any other witch for that matter, we cannot help but stand off incredulously from the film and the characters as the plot slowly lumbers to its predictable conclusion. Thus, Auntie Roo is abandoned by the script to muttering grotesque double-entendre dialogue (like "We'll fatten her up," said to Katy, not for dinner but for her health) and innocently brandishing meat cleavers and knives, as in one scene appearing in a black cape standing in a pose suggesting, bat-like, the traditional Halloween witch. All of these devices crassly fail. Indeed, Harrington has not even utilized his child actors as children. Part of the problem lies with all English children in English films, with their proper manner of speech and absurdly precise diction which often makes them appear to be very short 30-year-olds. At the end of **WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?**, Katy and Christopher are not innocently evil (or vice-versa) for their deeds, but merely petulantly foolish.

The credibility of the film rests in our belief that Christopher possesses a vivid imagination, yet we are never allowed to enter into it as we must or even to glimpse it at work. This lamentable fact is the most serious weakness of both Harrington and his film, and makes one wonder what Val Lewton could have done with the splendid premise, as it is defined here, of living out childhood and adult fantasies in real life. I am thinking, of course, of Lewton's studio-titled **CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE** (1944) which revealed a beautifully complex and mystifying, fable-like atmosphere to childhood that was amazingly successful for the slight story of his film but which could have satisfyingly sustained the more murderously sinister plot of **WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?**

At the end of Harrington's film, Christopher dashes back into the burning house for Katy's teddy bear because it contains Auntie Roo's jewels which they have stolen. In Lewton's world he would have returned to the house for the stuffed toy alone, for the wondrous, never explainable connotation of innocent childhood it represents.

David Bartholomew

Mark Lester, Shelley Winters and Chloe Franks in a scene from **WHOEVER SLEW AUNTIE ROO?** now in release from American International Pictures. The film fails largely due to director Curtis Harrington and screenwriters Robert Bles and James Sangster not developing any deep pervading quality of innocent childhood fantasy.







## THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY & THE OTHER

...the American dreams of pastoral tranquility and urban wealth are turned upside down, disgorging national demons.

**THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY** A Paramount Pictures Release. 5/72. In Color. 105 minutes. An ITC Production. Directed by Waris Hussein. Screenplay by Matt Robinson and Grimes Grice based on the novel by Ramona Stewart. Art director, Philip Rosenberg. Production supervisor, George Justin. Director of photography, Arthur Ornitz. Set decorator, Ed Stewart. Film edited by John Victor Smith. Production designer, Peter Murton. Makeup, Saul Meth.

Norah Benson ..... Shirley Maclaine  
Joel ..... Perry King  
Carrie Benson ..... Lisa Kohane  
Peter Benson ..... David Ellicott  
Veronica ..... Miriam Colon  
Erika ..... Lovelady Powell  
Dr. Reichman ..... Michael Horden  
Don Pedro ..... Edmundo Rivera Alvarez  
Mrs. Perez ..... Teodorino Bello  
Tonio Perez ..... Jose Fernandez  
Mr. Perez ..... Aukie Herger

**THE OTHER** and **THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY** are variations on a classic theme—good characters taken over by evil spirits—and both films meet pleasingly the requirements of their genre: at the same time that they are nifty thrillers, they're tantalizing us with ideas about the intermingling of good and evil and about the power of the unconscious. Eerie melodramas rather than psychological case studies, both films nonetheless offer us glimpses of our nightmare selves—the terrors of the id unleashed, our proximity to the deep end.

This view into the universal heart of darkness is one of the perennial pleasures of fantasy movies like these. Gothic horror thrillers, monster movies, films of the supernatural, futuristic visions, prehistoric tales; all these various kinds of fantasy films tap the demons of our unconscious, probe the outer edges of human psychology, give vision to our collective fears and obsessions.

These two movies operate precisely on this double-edged level of thrills and psychological insight. Both films dramatize a merging of the day and night selves and correspondingly, the grisly events in both take place in totally realistic settings which would seem to deny, but which serve with appropriate irony as cover-ups for, the dark deeds which transpire therein. The events in **THE OTHER** occur in a vernal rural setting—homespun mythic Americana of the not too distant past; **THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY** takes place alternately among the very rich and very poor of the Manhattan present. With its white clapboard house and surrounding farm, and its lazy summer atmosphere, **THE OTHER**

unfolds before us like a series of cozy covers from "The Saturday Evening Post." Less benign, but no less tangible, are **DELANEY**'s sleek East '70s town house and the congested, dingy tenements of a Spanish ghetto. The landscape of **THE OTHER**—**THE SUMMER OF '42** as nightmare—proves to be as infested as the big city, the rural setting nurturing the flowers of evil as naturally as contemporary Manhattan, the former generating a child murderer, the latter producing an equally pathological Puerto Rican criminal. Both twisted characters perpetuate themselves through the possession of their opposite numbers, the bad seed Holland inhabiting his angelic twin brother Niles, the Puerto Rican taking over the personality of his well-intentioned liberal-minded rich white friend.

The real source of terror in both films is exactly this extreme vulnerability of the "good" characters. Like **ROSEMARY'S BABY**—another superior thriller—both films offer us a world controlled totally by the powers of evil. Niles Perry and Joel Delaney are helpless in the presence of insurmountably energetic and resourceful evil spirits. Invaded by these spirits, the two victims become progressively schizophrenic until all remnants of their original personalities have disintegrated.

Both films end with the confirmation, rather than the extinction, of our fears: evil remains unchecked. Protected by his innocent exterior, Niles/Holland is undetected by his short-sighted family, he is free to go on committing crimes indefinitely. Though Joel is shot down, his spirit is transmitted to his sister, a manically possessive woman who ends up herself possessed.

Torn between his wicked brother and his wise and mystical grandmother, Niles capitulates to the power of darkness. Joel, an idealist with all the correct liberal sentiments, is overpowered both by hatred of the ghetto and the taint of his rich family. Innocence, good will—these positive qualities are altogether ineffectual against the agents of evil.

Films involving the supernatural are, of course, susceptible to multiple and multi-leveled interpretations. The seriousness of your thriller, its symbolic possibilities, is directly determined by the film's conception of the source and nature of its evil; if there is no explanation for the genesis of evil, if the bad characters are spontaneously bad in order to give us some thrills, if their wickedness has no metaphoric dimension, then obviously we're dealing with the lowest level the genre has to offer. Happily, these two films are intellectually ambitious, their evil agents charged by demonstrable psychic and social phenomena.

**THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY**, in

fact, tries rather too insistently to "account" for its evil spirit; **THE OTHER** errs in the opposite direction, its imputations of the source of evil too imprecise, too elusive. An allegory of contemporary race relations, **DELANEY** is about elemental hostilities between an oppressed minority and its white oppressors. The film's evil agent symbolically betokens the results of a rotten family life in the slums: the killer is a kid who goes bad because he never had any breaks; he gets even with the world of his rich white oppressors by perversely destroying the soul of a white boy who has befriended him and who has been driven by guilt to live unostentatiously in a ghetto.

Holland's criminality is likewise socially and familially conditioned—though much less specifically. He is the heir to an old respected American family. A family heirloom—a ring—is passed down from father to son, from brother to brother; the inheritance is tainted. Parochial, overly protective, the Perrys have bequeathed to their children a limiting and destructive heritage. The film is rife with Oedipal motifs: Holland kills his stern father, Niles treats his demented mother with paternalistic condescension. Parents, devouring children, are themselves devoured, just as, in **DELANEY**, the possessive characters end up themselves possessed.

Thomas Tryon's screenplay (adapted from his lush and gracefully written novel) flirts with large religious themes and hints at the corruptions and limitations of the conservative American characters, while at other times it is content to remain at the level of a skillful surface thriller of **THE BAD SEED** variety. Though, finally, it raises more questions than its rather threadbare narrative can legitimately support, **THE OTHER** is a really classy job. Robert Mulligan, as usual, has splendid success with his child actors (and there's virtuoso work from Uta Hagen), and his evocation of rural Americana is as thick and as palpable as it was in **THE SUMMER OF '42** and **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD**. Less richly crafted, **THE POSSESSION OF JOEL DELANEY** nonetheless sports a sensationally spooky performance by Perry King as the defenseless title character and the film is consistently, if sometimes mercilessly, tense. (Though she's certainly all right, Shirley Maclaine is clearly too nice and too bright to be able to impersonate with complete conviction her character's imperious stupidity.)

Two good, scary ones, these. Evil triumphs over good in archetypal American settings: the American dreams of pastoral tranquility and urban wealth are turned upside down, disgorging national demons.

Foster Hirsch





## THE OTHER

...old-fashioned in its rarely seen psychological delineation of atmosphere and its deep sense of creating more terror in the unseen than the seen...

**THE OTHER** A 20th Century Fox Release. 7/72. In Panavision and Color by DeLuxe. 100 minutes. A Rem-Benchmark Production. Produced and directed by Robert Mulligan. Executive producer and screenplay by Thomas Tryon, based on his original novel. Music by Jerry Goldsmith. Associate producer, Don Kranze. Director of photography, Robert L. Surtees, A.S.C. Film editing by Folmar Blangsted, A.C.E. and O. Nicholas Brown. Production designed by Albert Brenner. Set decorator, Ruby Levitt. Makeup, Joe Di Bella.

Ada ..... Uta Hagen  
Alexandra ..... Diana Muldaur  
Niles Perry ..... Chris Udvornoky  
Holland Perry ..... Martin Udvornoky  
Aunt Vee ..... Norma Connolly  
Angelini ..... Victor French  
Winnie ..... Loretta Laversee  
Uncle George ..... Lou Frizzell  
Mrs. Rowe ..... Portia Nelson  
Torrie ..... Jenny Sullivan

After a while it did not seem so surprising that Robert Mulligan had signed to direct *THE OTHER*. The film that he has churned from Tom (excuse me, Thomas) Tryon's cardinal novel of suspense (he also wrote the screen adaptation) finds a very handy niche in his rather oddly assorted output of films. From *FEAR STRIKES OUT* (1957) through last year's commercial blockbuster *SUMMER OF '42*, Mulligan has continuously studied the crucially anxiety-ridden period of adolescence when individuals first attempt to shed their childhood and tackle the social and moral tremors and responsibilities of adult life and in the process acquire their fledgling sense of self on which the rest of their lives will be based. While Mulligan's view of this multi-faceted subject in his films seems mostly sunny, loose, and somewhat frivolously superficial and sentimental as in *UP THE DOWN STAIRCASE* (1967) and *SUMMER OF '42*, he has on several occasions unleashed a deeper, darker side of his mind, when the frustrating and strained pressure on youth suddenly erupts in behavior somewhat more compulsive and unexplainably ambivalent as in *BABY THE RAIN MUST FALL* (1965) and the quietly understated (form against content) *INSIDE DAISY CLOVER* (1966). Mulligan returns to broaden this sliver of muted pessimism in *THE OTHER*. In some areas, the film recalls most clearly *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* (1963) both in its time setting (post-Depression) and the age of the protagonists. The thrust of the two films,

however, differs almost completely. The children in *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD* live through two black nightmares—one figurative and one literal—to greet the bright symbolic sunrise of the next morning. This optimism, in which huge moral lessons emerge as the function of social and physical pain only half understood by the children, radically opposes *THE OTHER*'s downward nihilistic spiral of characters and events.

The time and place of *THE OTHER* play an important role in the film. The Depression era cast an immense pressure on the structure of the family which necessitated a forced physical cohesiveness in order for the family to survive the hard times. As the national economy, and therefore, personal style of living, once more blossomed, families were suddenly faced with a loosening of physical and spiritual bonds as the younger members were once more able to free themselves from the added, sometimes stifling, responsibilities they had been forced to assume and move out on their own with more stable promise of better opportunities. The events of *THE OTHER* coincide with this moment of family struggle; they occur on a smallish Connecticut farm (except for several excursions to a nearby church and a neighbor's adjoining house, the film never leaves its tight confines) peopled by an initially confusing number of characters that include in addition to the son(s), his grandmother, mother, sister and husband, aunt and uncle, cousin, cook, and farm worker, all members of the Perry household. Mulligan and Tryon attempt with only partial success to identify the various individuals by their functions in the family. Mulligan quickly essays the lined-face harshness of life by showing the adult characters in static shots, while deftly characterizing the children with the fluid mobility of his camera following their movements in play, free and unhindered, the only such unburdened characters in the entire film. The unit isolation and bravura loneliness of the Perry clan also partially accounts, with a few freebie Freudianisms, for the main realization of the film in Niles/Holland. This character, in quite literally destroying his family, symbolizes the figurative weakening of the family as the structurally sound and workable backbone of American life by the social and economic forces at play. The resulting decay of the family unit has never repaired itself, and at this point in our own chaotic decade we still experience its effects.

Mulligan at first strives too hard visually to establish the time of his film with its accoutrements sometimes simplistically flooding the frame: "cute" dialogue ("Fine day for the race." "What race?" "Why, the human race!" and a Sidney Pollack-ish round of "Yowza, yowza, yowza") and objects (car, radio, clothing styles) and dead giveaways (movie titles, songs, a Prince Albert tobacco can, and the kicker, a Doc Savage book). As the film progresses, and the murders of Niles/Holland accumulate, Mulligan ambitiously treats this terrible clustering of events as an unmistakable implication, in a bogglingly larger sense, of the gathering thunderladen storm clouds which would in the space of several years erase the American sunlight and engulf the world in yet another holocaust of global war. Mulligan also sharply nudges us to ponder the ugly racism that horrifyingly shook this country during that Second World War when, at the end of the film, the party that has desperately searched for the missing baby fall, with no real evidence whatsoever, upon the Perry's incomprehensibly innocent Italian laborer, Angelini, as the killer.

Filmic structure has never been a bulwark of Mulligan's talent as a director. In most of his movies he must accept guilt for his habitual stringing together of series of thematically "talky" set pieces with little or no connecting tissue, particularly in his previous opus *SUMMER OF '42*. In *THE OTHER*, however, he has emphasized his camerawork to a greater extent and thus neatly conquered this severely limiting problem. *THE OTHER* begins on a very loose meandering course, but as our involvement in the film grows, he starts, imperceptibly at first, to tighten the narrative surface until, in the best tradition of Hitchcock, it becomes a rasping noose around our necks, affording no possible escape. This is not to deny the existence of sequences in *THE OTHER* which may be defined more or less as set pieces, but they are quite differently realized and better integrated here

At left: Robert Mulligan directs *THE OTHER*, currently in release from 20th Century Fox and based on the best-selling novel by Thomas Tryon. Top three: Mulligan gives instructions to Chris and Martin Udvornoky, identical twins who play the roles of Niles and Holland in the film. Bottom: Mulligan goes over a scene with stage actress Uta Hagen and Chris Udvornoky. All three give extraordinarily detailed and forceful performances in a film that features Mulligan's continued excellence with actors which dates back to his television work in the middle 50s. The Udvornoky twins came to the film with no acting experience, their photo submitted to the 20th Century Fox casting director by their grade school teacher who had heard about the well-publicized search for the film's child leads. Mulligan spent much of the film's pre-production time getting acquainted with his new leads and the rapport developed shows in their naturalistic, thoroughly believable performances.



than in his previous films. For example, in our first sampling of the "game" which Ada, Niles' grandmother who is still steeped in the ways of Old Russia, teaches him, we follow the darting swooping flight of a crow (because Niles is the crow). But instead of simply restricting himself to the generally expected visuals of the scene, Mulligan intercuts the next scene in flash-quick strokes and achieves an extraordinary pure thematic (and casual) linkage of them: the crow's soaring ends when a farmhand swings at it with a pitchfork (and Niles feels the pain), and an abrupt second later, while jumping from a hayloft, Niles' cousin Russell impales himself on a hidden pitchfork. Later Mulligan less admirably "sets up" the last major sequence, the theft of the baby, as, in short order, Niles reads to his mother a fairy story about trolls stealing an infant, its parents leave for a movie in town, a good ol' Universal storm begins with thunder and jagged lightning and pelting rain which spins the weather vane, and Niles creeps upstairs to tuck in the baby for the night. On the whole, however, one can safely say that *THE OTHER* is astutely characterized by images--most of Mulligan's earlier films, by words.

With a sense of tight, complexly accomplished structure so important to the film, the key scene of *THE OTHER*, brainstorming in its design and implications, becomes what has been too easily dismissed as a throwaway to the horror genre: the firemen's carnival sequence. The circus setting and its varied faintly distributing array of characters (and the myriad sense impressions it evokes in anyone who has ever leisurely walked through the middle of a fairgrounds in full bustle) always provide a tawdry aura of foreignness and unease (and why, oh why, doesn't someone pick up and film Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*); Mulligan utilizes this raw material for much more than its historical right film surface values. As Niles/Holland sneaks into the tent which houses the freak show and observes the various creatures sluggishly and sadly preparing for the next gaggle of paying customers who have chosen this brand of entertainment for their voyeuristic titillation, we are gently pushed back into the genuinely strange atmosphere of Tod Browning's *FREAKS*. Here, Mulligan suggests, as Browning did not, that the customers become more freakish than these pathetic distortions of Nature now forced to display themselves like so many museum pieces as their only means of livelihood. In a superbly blocked framing, Mulligan places the unseen Niles in a geometrically complete and horizontal line of wooden platforms where the freaks are seated, thus defining Niles, in effect, as one of them, an oddity of Nature. Then, in another darkened area of the sideshow tent, Niles becomes transfixed by a fetus (which, incidentally, amazingly resembles Kubrick's *Starchild* in 2001) in a bottle bathed in an unearthly purplish light, a beautifully executed foreshadowing of the exact fate, right down to the color, of the baby in the last sequence. When Niles/Holland next steals into the tent of the magician to see his fraudulent disappearing act, we witness what will be in essence *THE OTHER*'s closing scene. With an air of superiority that only a child can assume when he suspects he is being fooled, Niles/Holland confronts the magician in an underplayed wordless exchange of liquid glances as the performer enters the tent from the rear (having slipped through the trap door in the floor of the supposedly escape-proof chamber) to face an audience of "hicks" to whom he obviously feels superior (note the wonderfully bored expression of his assistant). Later, at home, Niles and Holland discuss using their secret cubbyhole in the barn and adapting the act for the enjoyment of the rest of the family. At the end of the film, however, the difference between the carnival trick and the final scene of the film, both disappearing acts, becomes that between artless acting and life, between earthy sham and the true supernatural, as Niles/Holland escapes the inferno prepared for him.

One of Mulligan's chief triumphs in *THE OTHER* is the extremely clean and uncluttered logic with which he builds his film and entralls his audience. Only astute viewers (and readers of the source novel) will guess the main plot twist, that Holland is physically, if not spiritually, dead, by the expertly concealed (and concealing) use of two-shot for all the boys' scenes together. At that



astonishingly revelatory point in the film, Mulligan comes close to a dangerously psychic manipulation of his audience (like Hitchcock's "lying" flashback in *STAGE DOOR*) since he has flauntingly and recognizably used two actors for the brothers throughout the film (although they never appear in the same frame). Mulligan forces his audience to nearly the same sublime pinnacle that Hitchcock reached in *VERTIGO*: that virtually of requiring his audience to re-see the film which he has now thrust, via that one fleeting glimpse of the tombstone, into a completely different light that necessarily demands a change in the viewer's attitude and response. While Mulligan constantly hovers near the introduction of the supernatural through all of *THE OTHER*, he rigidly retains the very believable realistic (non-fantastic) quality of his story, and only at the film's conclusion does he tease us with Niles' surprising and Nature-ally unexplainable escape from the barn fire. This acid taste of the demonic supernatural, injected by the lingering shot of the sliced lock in the charred smoldering ruins of the barn that would also have been his fiery death, redeems what in very many recent genre films would be merely a trick (and no treat) ending.

Ada's game, scripturally an old Russian superstition and the main device of the film, is interesting to consider in itself. It claims responsibility for Holland's continued existence and devastating violence; hence, suddenly understanding the chain of events and the force that perpetuated them, Ada awakes from her aloofness and comfortable life couched in past memories to try to deliver (in a quite Biblical meaning of the word) what remains of her family from Niles/Holland's evil, only to wind up simply another victim herself. The game is also used to lessen the finality of death. Earlier, in the church, Ada explains to Niles that if death should threaten him, he has only to think of the angel of the stained glass window above their heads to allay the pain and fear. Mulligan uses this idea ironically in the fire scene by cutting in the image of the angel; we are confused as to who is doing the thinking, Niles or Ada, as she plunges headlong with a kerosene lamp into Niles' closed and combustible secret place. (That scene also parallels the very first death attributed to Niles/Holland, told in flashback, of the father.) We all, in fact, partially use the game in any of our soul-saving, worry-dissolving bouts of wishful thinking that takes us momentarily out of ourselves either staring out a window or, indeed, looking at a film. An entire system of acting somewhat erroneously referred to as Method corresponds to the game.

*THE OTHER*, then, is no ordinary piece of cinefantastique. It is distinguished on nearly every



one of its entwining layers of value. Not the least of talents at work here belongs to Robert Surtees and his inestimable photography. Surtees, surely one of the busiest and most versatile cameramen in the industry today, has brilliantly shot four widely varying kinds of films, *SUMMER OF '42*, *THE LAST PICTURE SHOW* (Bogdanovich), *THE COWBOYS* (Rydell), and *THE OTHER*, all in 1971. His camera excellently enhances *THE OTHER*'s oscillating moods; the early extremely bright colors gradually give way to more subdued shades and finally conclude in a color-drained, bluish-gray appropriate to the last scenes. While his work seems generally poetic, Surtees is not adverse to commenting on the kind of splotchy shimmering telephoto lyricism which so easily made Mulligan's *SUMMER OF '42* a soft cliché: during a screenfilling flurry of milkweed seeds à la floating pillow feathers in Vigo's *ZERO DE CONDUITE*, Surtees suddenly zooms his camera back. The increased distance neatly destroys the unfocused effect lest we become lost in it and jarringly pushes the characters back into the context of their physical setting. Surtees also displays a compelling, theme modifying usage of expressionist lighting. For example, the two interior church scenes: the first one which discusses the stained glass angel is light, bright and shadowless, the church interior illuminated; the second, when Ada confirms her fatal suspicions about Niles and the series of accidents, is dark and claustrophobic, with only the two pale faces gleaming out of the blackness. Yet both scenes occur at the same time of day with the same blazing sun drenching the building with glaring white light.

The overall amazing quality of acting in Tryon's taut much-of-the-time-silent screenplay particularly spotlights screen neophytes Chris and Martin Udvornoky as Niles and Holland and the veteran stage actress (also new to film) Uta Hagen as Ada. All three give extraordinarily detailed and forceful performances in a film that features Mulligan's continued excellence with actors which dates back to his television work in the middle '50s.

And finally it is Mulligan who deserves most of the credit. The barest measure of his directorial skill can be seen in his stunning capture of the changing moods of childhood (again with a nod back to *TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD*): from the film's beginning sense of joyous and mysterious adventure of youthful imagination in full swing (without Mulligan's resorting to subjectiveness) as we follow Niles and Holland at play to the bitterly eerie quality of evil, of corrupted innocence, inherent in the same imagination, as the brutal deaths alarmingly mount. Mulligan attains and unifies a middle point between these two extremes in the continued aural emphasis of the rattling tobacco tin which Niles constantly carries in his shirt and which contains, among other childhood trinkets, a severed finger. Evidence of Mulligan's remarkable stylistic abundances, from the physical framing of objects in the foreground with the important action occurring in the background, an effect that forces our eyes to cover every part of the frame throughout the film, to one of the most haunting fusions of sound and image the screen has ever known as in the darkened living room Niles frantically attempts to communicate with Holland—"Holland, where is the baby?"—although this freezing moment in the film has suffered somewhat as a result of the line's inclusion in the oft-played television trailer and print ads.

Mulligan has fashioned a film that represents an exciting combination of old-fashioned and very new elements (camera angles, quick cuts, etc.); old-fashioned in its rarely seen psychological delineation of atmosphere and its deep sense of creating more terror in the unseen than in the seen. *THE OTHER* affords quite a number of violent scenes which, due to Mulligan's welcomed restraint and taste, are suggested rather than splattered; the difference becomes that between continued heart-pounding suspense and the revolting gore that upends stomachs. The film revolves around our sense of discovery of its contents, not of our being forced only to recognize by shock effects so thoroughly embedded in most horror films. As all masterpieces of horror must, *THE OTHER* ends in soulrendering chaos and pessimism.

David Bartholomew





## MOONCHILD

...poses philosophical questions that need answering by each and every individual.

MOONCHILD A Filmmakers Ltd Release. 5/72. In Color. Executive producer, Donald G. Wize-man, Jr. Produced by Dick Alexander. Written and directed by Alan Gadney. Associate executive producer, John Mansfield. Associate producer, James Sund. Music produced by Kelly Gordon. Composed by Pat Williams and Bill Byers. Director of photography, Emmett Alston. Costume designer and makeup, Jane Alexander. Edited by Jack H. Conrad. Production manager, Dennis S. Johnson. Sound recordist, Ken Robinson. Camera operator, Tom Ackerman. Sound editor, Joe Von Stroheim. Wardrobe, Jeanne Liptak. Art director, Richard Tamburino.

Maitre D' .....	Victor Buono
The Walker .....	John Carradine
Alchemist .....	William Challee
Girl .....	Janet Landgard
The Manager .....	Pat Renella
The Student .....	Mark Travis
Homunculus .....	Frank Corsentino
Maid .....	Marie Denn

First feature films by young directors may display many aesthetic flaws and inconsistencies if they aim too high conceptually, or they may be just simple, basic, well-made exercises like Trumbull's SILENT RUNNING. George Lucas

At left, scenes from MOONCHILD, the feature film debut for director Alan Gadney and American Media Productions. Top: The Alchemist (William Challee) is comforted by his daughter (Janet Landgard), a lovely mute who possesses a delicate, appealing innocence. Bottom: The Manager and the Maitre D' (Victor Buono) come to blows in a climactic scene, here being filmed from a fresh angle with camera operator Tom Ackerman flat on his back on the floor. MOONCHILD had its gala world premier May 20th at Chrysler Hall in Norfolk, Virginia where it failed to garner an enthusiastic distributor response or pickup.

aimed very high in his superb THX 1138, but Alan Gadney has attempted a thematic complexity in his MOONCHILD far surpassing many such initial endeavors. In this case, one must dig beneath surface technical considerations to discover the core of conceptual strength and visceral power pulsating throughout the film's structure.

MOONCHILD possesses a kinetic energy of style and a finely honed concentration of narrative that is emotionally and intellectually stimulating and exciting. It is a strenuously wrought nightmare of characters, symbolism, Pinteresque dialog, and barely comprehensible mysteries.

One is placed in the bewildering predicament of The Student (Mark Travis) as he is bombarded with twisted, riddled conversations by mysterious characters, and reappearing mental visions and flashbacks. The Maitre D' (Victor Buono) keeps goading The Student into theological debate and acknowledgement of God, while The Manager (Pat Renella) tries to ingrain into him a militaristic, materialistic philosophy. But they all speak in never-ending circles, and even a kindly old man (William Challee) is little help in finding the key to help him find his way out of a helpless, confusing labyrinth of the bizarre, intangible people and words--like a GRAND HOTEL gone mad.

The film is always several steps ahead of the audience, with fast-moving, often confusing, scenes and dialog. The television-trained viewer, who can grasp a fragment better than a whole, would not understand MOONCHILD, for it is an entity rather than an assortment of pieces. Gadney's own screenplay brushes ever so close to the pretentious in the semi-poetic dialog that it's an overwhelming triumph that he blends his style so organically, meaningfully, and compellingly with the basic substance of his material.

Even at the end, when parts of the mystery have been solved, Gadney leaves the viewer baffled, yet stunned and exhilarated. Bewilderment is a perfect reaction to the film for, even today, the philosophical questions it poses need answering by each and every individual. The dilemma of spiritualism and materialism, science and religion, religion and humanism, and war and peace, are not just world problems, but individual and personal ones. MOONCHILD never blatantly pursues or confuses the issues, but combines them with incredibly fast precision and perfunctory implicitness. One has no time to ponder on what the people are saying, or what is happening, but a slower, or more static, pacing would not only have dulled its impact, but made evident its underlying pretentiousness.





Above, scenes from *MOONCHILD*, currently in release through Filmmakers Ltd. Right: Victor Buono as the Maitre D' who represents the power and influence of the Church. Left: Pat Renella as The Manager, the sinister overlord of the Inn who attempts to indoctrinate The Student with his own martial attitudes. The philosophical questions posed by *MOONCHILD* need answering by each and every individual. The dilemma of spiritualism and materialism, science and religion, religion and humanism, and war and peace, are not just world problems, but individual and personal ones.

Gadney has chosen his actors with a fine eye for the outrageous, theatrical absurdity of the story. Mark Travis perfectly expresses the character's restrained, perplexed nature, countered with John Carradine's lavishly mad expressiveness, which needed more dialog clarity than anything else. Pat Renella's seedy, beautifully understood and sinister Manager splendidly compliments Victor Buono's magnificent spiritual indulgence, reaching a height of absurdist intensity that marks this among his greatest performances. William Challee provides the balance of warmth and humanity vital to the theme, and his daughter, a lovely mute played by Janet Landgard, possesses a delicate, appealing innocence. As the deformed, man-made man, Frank Corsentino creates a sympathetic character through agile body and facial expression, and Marie Denn is amusingly, bitingly sarcastic as an inquisitive Maid.

There are many, many things in Gadney's direction of players and camera that are absolutely brilliant. Though bits here and there lack strong cohesion and development to maintain the flow of events, these weaknesses are amazingly few. *MOONCHILD* is about as tight and compact a film as possible, with remarkable technical polish considering the strain placed on all first features.

Emmett Alston's photography is often lovingly, effectively stylized, and the color quality is frequently dazzling. With a bow to Isaac Hayes, Pat Williams' music is surprisingly appropriate to the film's overall feeling and tempo. Jack H. Conrad deserves special mention for assisting Gadney in editing such an immensely difficult work. Indeed it is one of the prime factors in making *MOONCHILD* the fascinating, uncommon film that it is.

Dale Winogura

## THE NIGHT STALKER

...the best modern vampire story that has been done.

**THE NIGHT STALKER** ABC-TV. 1/11/72. 80 minutes. In Color. Produced by Dan Curtis. Directed by John Llewellyn Moxey. Teleplay by Richard Matheson. Music by Robert Cobert. Director of photography, Michael Hugo. Editor, Desmond Marquette. Art director, Trevor Williams.

Carl Kolchak ..... Darren McGavin  
Gail Foster ..... Carol Lynley  
Vincenzo ..... Simon Oakland  
Bernie Jenks ..... Ralph Meeker  
Sheriff Butcher ..... Claude Akins  
Janos Skorzeny ..... Barry Atwater

The vast wasteland has discovered the worlds of fantasy and the realm of horror, and the 1971-1972 season has produced an abundance of witches, ESPers, ghosts and vampires. The best that was produced this season is an ABC Movie of the Week titled *THE NIGHT STALKER*, an eerily realistic modern-day vampire movie which racked up the highest rating ever for a MOW (33.2). The movie was taken from an unpublished book by Jeff Rice called *The Kolchak Papers*, which was snapped up for publication as soon as the Nielsens were in. The movie has also been slated for theatrical release, as was *BRIAN'S SONG*, another highly rated MOW.

The movie was produced by Dan Curtis of "Dark Shadows" fame. The only other person connected with "Dark Shadows" and *THE NIGHT STALKER* was Robert Cobert, who scored both. He used bits of music which would strike a familiar chord with "Dark Shadows" fans; perhaps an all too familiar chord by now. Richard Matheson's script was an excellent adaptation of the book, condensing the story but not changing the mood of the book, although the ending was softened for the squeemish. Director John Llewellyn Moxey, who did a masterful job with the Dan Curtis production of *THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE* several seasons back, kept up a good even pace and a high level of intelligence and believability. Location shooting also added greatly to the film's reality. The audience was never more than one step ahead of Kolchak as he put together the pieces of the murders and concluded that Las Vegas had a real vampire.

*THE NIGHT STALKER* is, however, the best modern vampire story that has been done to date.



Scenes from ABC's *THE NIGHT STALKER*. Above: Barry Atwater as the modern-day vampire Janos Skorzeny. At left, Top: Kolchak (Darren McGavin) gets a going over from his editor (Simon Oakland). Bottom: Kolchak is trapped by the cat-like Skorzeny. The film maintains a high level of intelligence and believability throughout.

It did not transplant the 19th Century vampire into the 20th Century. Instead we have a vampire in a different vein, with no courtly manners and no cape. He didn't go in for midnight nibbles with a romantic young lady, nor was there any handsome young hero to rescue her. This vampire was a cold-blooded killer, striking at random and baffling the police. The hero was a middle-aged down-and-out reporter.

Darren McGavin starred as Carl Kolchak, a reporter trying to recapture the past by writing that one big story to put him on top again. He played the part well, creating sympathy for himself as he worked his way deeper and deeper into the mystery, fighting both the politicians and his own editor, only to be inevitably beaten, as the police patsy. Carol Lynley as Kolchak's girlfriend Gail, contributed little but decoration. Claude Akins was cast as a thoroughly unlikely but crafty police commissioner. Simon Oakland, as Kolchak's crusty editor, turned in a fine performance, particularly in his last scene with Kolchak. Barry Atwater gave an excellent performance as Janos Skorzeny, the vampire. He did not attempt to copy any earlier portrayal of a vampire, instead creating his own image and believability.

Bloodletting was kept to a minimum also, apparently to satisfy TV's edict against violence, however Moxey was wildly successful in creating a feeling of claustrophobic terror and suspense by manipulating his vampire to strike unsuspectingly and without warning and by staging these attacks in a manner that makes the vampire's swiftness, strength and agility truly fearsome. Skorzeny is rather quietly staked offscreen, in marked contrast to his writhing, screaming, disintegrating demise in the book, or even Curtis' bloody ending to *HOUSE OF DARK SHADOWS*.

*THE NIGHT STALKER* should have pleased almost anyone--the murder mystery fan, the horror fan and the TV movie fan--for it has all the needed elements--murder, mystery, horror, a good story and some damn fine acting. Don't pass it up again.

Kathryn Bushman



# THE NIGHTCOMERS

THE NIGHTCOMERS An Avco Embassy Release. 2/72. In Technicolor. 95 minutes. A Scimitar Production. Produced and directed by Michael Winner. Written by Michael Hastings based on characters by Henry James. Music composed and conducted by Jerry Fielding. Director of photography, Robert Paynter. Film editor, Frederick Wilson. Art director, Herbert Westbrook.

Peter Quint ..... Marlon Brando  
Miss Jessel ..... Stephanie Beacham  
Mrs. Grose ..... Thora Hird  
Flora ..... Verna Harvey  
Miles ..... Christopher Ellis  
New Governess ..... Anna Palk

The ups and downs of Michael Winner's questionable filmic talents are comprehensively expressed in his best film to date, *THE NIGHTCOMERS*. But it is far from being a great film (Winner has yet to make one), and yet there are some brilliant aspects in it that suggest its maker has the germ of some genuinely potent talent.

At its essence, it is a relatively pale treatment of the themes in the classic novella, Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, which in turn became Jack Clayton's film masterpiece, *THE INNOCENTS*. Corrupted innocence and identity transfer are again at the story's core, and Winner's film is basically a rehash of the events leading up to the reappearing ghosts of Peter Quint and his mistress, though considerably altered. But *THE INNOCENTS* was as ambivalently pathological as *THE NIGHTCOMERS* is patently psychological. One is made to be as certain of the children's reality in Winner's film just as one is unsure of the governess' fantasies in Clayton's.

Winner mangles his cinematic continuity and thrust consistently, but yet he manages to keep the narrative elusively compelling and absorbingly thoughtful almost throughout. Though he lacks thematic and editorial strength and vision, Winner's handling of certain individual scenes are, in and of themselves, diamond-like. He holds on characters' faces or an action within the shot with a precision and depth that he lacks in putting it all together in one, trenchant whole.

But Marlon Brando's performance as Quint can truly be called great, with the strong undertone of emotional explosiveness that is all too familiar to those who love his best work. He is the total film actor, and still one of the very few today who can be as subtle as a pindrop in expressing emotion, but is as dynamic as a stage performer in coming across on film. This can easily go up there with his superb roles in *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE*, *ON THE WATERFRONT*, and *THE GODFATHER* among so many magnificent performances.

Quint is a man of such dramatic emotional contrasts that shifting from the kind, helpful gardener to the lusting sadist is no easy thing for any actor. Brando effects such smooth, unconscious and utterly persuasive transitions of character that he makes it look easy, which it never really is.

As in Winner's other films, young people are sloppily, degradingly handled. Here, the boy and girl who adopt the personalities of Quint and his mistress are hollow-shelled puppets, dully expressive, and wholly unconvincing. In *THE INNOCENTS*, Martin Stephens and Pamela Franklin conveyed a charm in evil and decadence in innocence that was as captivating as it was terrifying. But here, they are boring non-sequiturs in personality and performance, and I suspect Winner is again to blame for their casting as he is for their performance.

Yet Winner brings off one of the most beautiful erotic scenes of recent years. When Quint and his mistress make love in a series of dissolving scenes, Winner captures the sweating shimmer and obsessive passion of their love with a haunting feeling and sublime taste that most of the film could have used.

For all its faults, *THE NIGHTCOMERS* has enough fascination and intensity to make it a good, Gothic psychological film. But one only has to see *THE INNOCENTS* to discover how similar themes are better handled.

Dale Winogura



## BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU

...easy profundities, dropping from the humor like dead flies, seem forced and formulated...

*BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU* Public Broadcasting Service. Telecast 3/13/72. In Color. 90 minutes. Segment of NET Playhouse Special of the Week. Produced by Channel WNET/13/New York City. Produced by David Loxton. Directed by Fred Barzyk. Associate producers, Olivia Tappan and Matt Herman. Written by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. Director of photography, Bryd Estus. Video tape effects by David Atwood.

Stony Stevenson ..... Bill Hickey  
Bokonon ..... Kevin McCarthy  
Anchorman & Astronaut ..... Bob & Ray

NET Playhouse recently presented a Cliff's Notes introduction to Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. via a film, *BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU*: A *SPACE FANTASY*, directed by Fred Barzyk.

Appearing nationally on the Public Broadcasting System in mid-March, Barzyk's film is a (not quite crazy) quilt stitched from little patches of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s novels, short stories and plays. We follow the adventures of Stony Stevenson (Bill Hickey), winner of the Blast Off energy drink jingle contest who, for his prize, journeys to Prometheus 5 to the "chrono-synclastic infundibulum" (the space warp from *Sirens of Titan*). After six months in space, Stony slants into the warp and for the rest of the film is diffused into various locales and time patterns of Earth, existing in none of them and all of them at once.

Stony crashes first on the island of San Lorenzo (from *Cat's Cradle*) where Bokonon leads a group of idyllic gentle people (strongly reminiscent of the Eloi from George Pal's *THE TIME MACHINE*, 1960) who make love with their feet and are, of course, an outlawed "religion." As soldiers attack them, Stony is whisked to an operating theatre amidst the conspiracy trial of a social revolutionary. The jury views an animated film "A Land Of Plenty" extolling the (dubious) virtues of our 70s materialistic lifestyle. The effect of the film mentally derails the revolutionary and in the ensuing confusion, Stony finds himself in a phone booth in Schenectady, New York. He calls Mission Control, falls asleep after hearing their warning to get back into space, and awakens into his third adventure in the Hoenikker Labora-

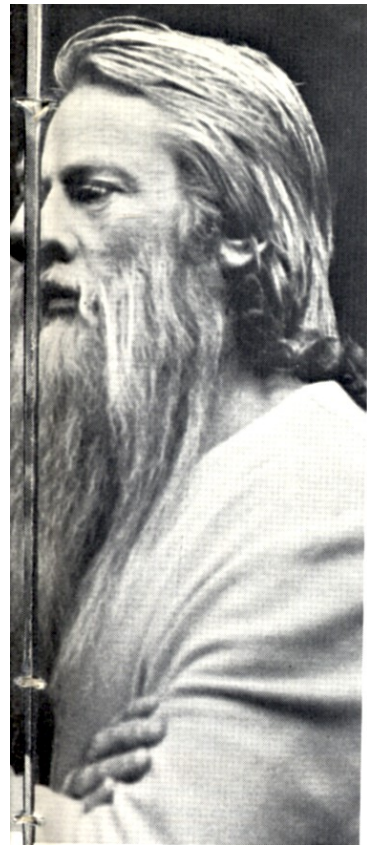
tory of Immortality (from *Player Piano*). A military man persuades Hoenikker to devise an Ice-9 capsule to facilitate ground warfare in jungle mud, a capsule which if dropped would unavoidably freeze the entire Earth and all life on it. Outside the Lab, the 245th Amendment to the Constitution has decreed absolute equality on pain of death. A woman, Diana Moonglampers, imposes handicaps on all superior in any way to the median of the population. Stony is fitted with weights to slow his speed and earphones emitting piercing noises to dull his too-high IQ. Stony escapes to a television studio where he watches on monitors an incredibly awkward and bulky ballet (the dancers all wearing handicaps of various kinds). A criminal (unhandicapped) Bergeron enters, liberates one of the ballerinas, and begins a graceful exquisite dance only to be shotgunned down by Moonglampers.

Stony's fourth stop is in the Ethical Suicide Parlor (from *Welcome to the Monkey House*), a business enterprise (complete with insipid TV ads) that guarantees a beautiful, painless death-escape, including a Howard Johnson's last supper, from the people-polluted, pill-oriented Earth. The next episode finds Stony in Heaven (New York's World's Fair grounds in Flushing) with little Wanda June (from "Happy Birthday, Wanda June"), a ballooned fire engine, and the generally vapid activities that connotated the Gary, Indiana of Meredith Wilson's "Music Man." Stony pits himself in a battle with Death, and discovers he can win by the use of his powers of imagination.

The final segment shows Stony rising from his grave in a Brooklyn cemetery, encountering a groundskeeper who tells him his fate: that Stony was never found. The space capsule had landed in the Pacific, but it was empty.

Fred Barzyk's film of Vonnegut's script is a play on its subtitle "A Space Fantasy" as it deals almost exclusively with the hip theme of ecology (and the purity of space, both here and above) from an examination of the different pollutions (from people to society to thought) that presently threaten to engulf us. The film is technically proficient and succeeds much of the time due to Bryd Estus' photography and some marvelously effec-





Left: Marlon Brando as Quint in *THE NIGHTCOMERS*, adapted from Henry James' *Turn of the Screw*, in release from Avco Embassy Pictures. Middle: Author Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. and actor Kevin McCarthy during the filming of Vonnegut's *BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU* for National Educational Television. Right: Clint Eastwood is angered when admirer Jessica Walter is unwilling to go her way after an evening together from *PLAY MISTY FOR ME*, Eastwood's first directorial effort in release from Universal Pictures. Bottom: Bob and Ray play a unique newscasting team covering a Cape Kennedy launch in Vonnegut's *BETWEEN TIME AND TIMBUKTU*.

tive video tape effects by David Atwood. But, all in all, it fails to transcend the small screen and smaller medium for which it was intended.

There are some brilliant satiric moments to savor. The mission Control sequences with Bob and Ray are delightful as well as the disoriented, clunky ballet and the newscaster (in the third segment) vainly trying to read a news dispatch behind his handicap, great thick moonish spectacles. The film shown to the jury, "A Land of Plenty" is a wicked parody of not only the blasé color fantasies of Peter Max but also the wonderfully empty style of 1950s family-aimed educational documentaries.

But the problem with *TIME AND TIMBUKTU* is indeed the problem of much of Vonnegut's work: a collection of very funny bits and pieces that never coalesce into any kind of unified design nor work to any conclusive purpose. Vonnegut's novels, like Stony's adventures, build a full head of steam only to drop off somewhere in

space, unattached and unfocused. And Barzyk and Vonnegut, in snipping ideas and fragments here and there from many novels and stories, seriously compounds the problem.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. is a very funny writer, but when he does write toward a serious point, philosophical or otherwise, he begins to stomp his boots on dangerously thin ice. *TIME AND TIMBUKTU* ends with Stony confronting Death in the person of A. Hitler and defeating him (much in the dual-istic manner of Price vs. Karloff in Corman's *THE RAVEN*, 1963) with the realization that the ultimate reality is mental. (Earlier, Stony described his travels as consisting of the clash of continuums of memory and fantasy. His flight is through the mind, a la Resnais.) Thus Stony smugly triumphs with the force of imagination alone. He emerges at the end as a free spirit able to wander at will, transcending any earthly fate, possibly because he refuses to imagine one.

If such a solution is postulated by Barzyk in his film, it proves largely consistent with Vonnegut's writings. When faced with the substance which should reinforce his satire, Vonnegut turns to the simplistic (Stony's final realization, above) or to the maudlin (for example, the Bergeron ballet episode) or sometimes to both. Consequently, we are treated to several somewhat precious aphorisms. Bokomon warns to be wary of "what you pretend to be for you may wake up to be it." At another time, Stony reassures himself by pondering "all the mud that didn't get to sit up and look around." And Stony's epitaph: "all is beautiful and nothing hurt." Such easy profundities, dropping out of the humor like dead flies, seem forced and formulated without the benefit of real insight, and, especially in this film of fragments, shorn of even the slight contextual value Vonnegut provides for them in his texts.

Vonnegut's solutions are hardly relevant either to we the viewers (and readers) or to the fictional characters, for that matter; everyone deserves better. Barzyk's film stumbles along pleasantly enough at times, but it never adds up to anything more than the value of a few of its hilarious pieces. Vonnegut, once almost written off as a mediocre science fiction storyteller, has now been lionized by the media, the young, and soon the filmmakers; he may be in danger of turning into an institution which necessarily demands that his work assume (Moonglamper-like) a common denominator of value and taste roughly equivalent to the saccharine puerility of Rod McKuen.

But then... so it goes.

David Bartholomew

## PLAY MISTY FOR ME

**PLAY MISTY FOR ME** A Universal Pictures Release. 11/71. In Technicolor. 102 minutes. Produced by Robert Daley. Directed by Clint Eastwood. Screenplay by Jo Heims and Dean Riesner. Director of photography, Bruce Surtees. Art director, Alexander Golitzen. Set decorator, Ralph Hurst. Film editor, Carl Pingitore.

Dave ..... Clint Eastwood  
Evelyn ..... Jessica Walter  
Tobie ..... Donna Mills  
Sgt. McCallum ..... John Larch  
Frank ..... Jack Ging  
Madge ..... Irene Hervey  
Murphy ..... Don Siegel

Psycho suspense-melodrama remains a tricky area, as so few of them ever reach the heights of artistic accomplishment and bold, intense emotional impact of a masterpiece like Hitchcock's *PSYCHO*. Even worse, films like the over-rated, pretentious, and mangled Polanski film, *REPULSION*, are cited as brilliant, and all distinctions between the real achievement, and the phoney one, are lost completely.

Clint Eastwood's first directorial endeavor, *PLAY MISTY FOR ME*, at times brushes the top of cinematic genius and, though it comes close to being a masterpiece, it's one of the very greatest works of its kind made recently in spite of its few, though inescapably detrimental, faults. Eastwood has verified his immense, under-rated talents not only as actor, but as filmmaker.

It is not too presumptuous to assume that his favorite director, Donald Siegel, helped him along in his task and, to some extent, it shows. The feeling of calm normality at the beginning; the gradual, almost unseen build-up of character and situational tension; and the ultimate explosion of conflicts are all inherent in such brilliant works as Siegel's *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* and *THE BEGUILLED*.

In *PLAY MISTY FOR ME*, Eastwood might just be paying a sort of fond tribute to his very good friend, with a wonderful in-joke of having Siegel himself play one of the parts, and beautifully too. The forceful narrative drive, the dedicated adherence to cinematic story development, and the strong undercurrents of growing insanity and anticipation of danger are all powerfully conveyed in Eastwood's recognizably personal work.

The idea of a girl latching herself onto a popular, coolheaded deejay, and eventually building her noticeable psychotic tendencies to total insanity by jealousy for his love of another girl, brutal suspicion, and frustrated need, certainly sounds ludicrous and filmically inconceivable on paper. But Eastwood and his team make it all work so beautifully that one can accept the somewhat unbelievable circumstances quite readily on an emotional level, like most of Siegel's work. No intellect is needed to be gripped by the film, but a visceral involvement that is deeply embedded within the entire structure.

At times, the film stops completely for lyrical self-indulgence, with a walk through the woods and nude love-making (however, much less pretentious than Lean's forest sex interlude in *RYAN'S DAUGHTER*); and an overlong rock concert.

Eastwood is perfectly restrained as the deejay, and yet there is that unmistakable tension eating away inside him that is seen not only in his character, but in the personality of the film. As the psychotic girl, Jessica Walter's performance can easily be misconstrued as over-acting and theatrical indulgence, but her hysteria, and helpless anxiety and violence, are portrayed on such an unmistakably gut level that it becomes a devastating, disturbing experience watching her unnervingly realistic creation. Hers is not a flamboyant show at all, but a character of terrifying conviction and probability, and she is just magnificent.

Eastwood has proven his ability in *PLAY MISTY FOR ME*, and one hopes this will not be a one shot stab at directing. He has made a strange, powerful, and superb film of both genre feeling and infinite visual dimension, and such marvelous dedication to the form as he displays should not be stilled or repressed.

Dale Winogura





# FRIGHT

...builds an excruciatingly turgid, suffocating atmosphere.

**FRIGHT** An Allied Artists Release. 4/72. In Eastman Color. 87 minutes. A Fantale Films Production. Produced by Harry Fine and Michael Style. Directed by Peter Collinson. Screenplay by Tudor Gates. Director of photography, Ian Wil-son. Edited by Raymond Poulton.

Amanda ..... Susan George  
Helen ..... Honor Blackman  
Brian ..... Ian Bannen  
Dr. Cordell ..... John Gregson  
Jim ..... George Cole  
Chris ..... Dennis Waterman  
Tara ..... Tara Collinson

Peter Collinson's **FRIGHT**, like many great films, is not exactly what it masquerades as. Unfortunately, Collinson and his screenwriter, Tudor Gates, fail to provide the thrust and clarity of insight, let alone the technical mechanics, that distinguish those films that try hard and succeed from those that are merely trying.

Collinson sets his scene very quickly. A college girl, Amanda (Susan George), arrives for an evening of babysitting to the large desolate estate and morbidly furnished home of Helen Lloyd (Honor Blackman) and three-year-old son Tara (Tara Collinson) while Helen and Jim (George Cole) join Dr. Cordell (John Gregson) for a leisurely consumed dinner in the nearby village. From that point onward, the night holds nothing less than pain, terror, and a few deaths for every one of these characters including Amanda's rather suffering boyfriend Chris (Dennis Waterman). The chief perpetrator of all this havoc is Brian (Ian Bannen), Helen's institutionalized husband, who has chosen this night to escape from the asylum where he was sent for his attempted strangulation of Helen and return to his home, wife and child. Before his violent demise an interminable 87 minutes later, he kills one woman and, perhaps, Amanda's friend Chris and rapes Amanda in his raging-gentle psychosis. In its equally psychotic construction, the film may be readily divided almost exactly in half, with the latter part mainly devoted to the film's grisly business.

The first half of **FRIGHT** is a conspicuously quaint and unexciting repetition of the lady-alone-in-a-dark-scary-house situation that has unwisely and unfairly served as the basis for countless horror films of the past. Perhaps the problem is exactly that: the ground Collinson and Gates cover here in this first half of their film is just too familiar and their blending of the clichéd elements not sufficiently imaginative to bring the material to life. Collinson has relied on style to redeem this material, and the result is the sort of pyrotechnical fracas that only an artist of the stature of Ken Russell can satisfactorily utilize.

Collinson sprays the screen with the entire catalogue of haunted house items: door locks and bolts and chains slam shut with the heaviness of impending doom, water taps drip ominously, an outside clothesline dully snaps against a window, water pipes clang and floor boards croak, tele-

Susan George.



phone lines die in mid conversation, a tea kettle screams with more than boiling water, and complementing all these things which go bump in the night, a hollow battering wind-song. A multitude of red herrings unconsciously (even for a horror film) engulf us, from the unexpected tall shadow cast by small Tara in a doorway to Helen and Jim's pointed mention of spirits and poltergeists. Collinson has chosen to shoot this first half of his film with a continually uptilted camera (perhaps not as grotesque or, on the other hand, as thematically linked, as Welles' textbook use of it in **MR. ARKADIN**). But the technique soon becomes as maddeningly manipulated as the forced cryptiveness of the early dialogue. Unlike his first film, **THE PENTHOUSE** (1967), with its endlessly circling, constantly maneuvering camera, Collinson's camerawork in **FRIGHT** is static (although—Praise the Lord!—nearly zoom-free) and he emphasizes cutting for the movement of the film. This ploy, particularly since the photography is laced with closeups, necessarily imparts a huge importance to objects, so much so that they swallow up the actors and assume the major dominance in the film, a very deep flaw especially when coupled with the film's generally unpleasant acting. (I am somewhat ridiculously reminded, by this objectification, of Bresson; also I note facetiously, like **UNE FEMME DOUCE**, **FRIGHT** is unified by its use of doors and windows—no serious comparison intended.)

At the point in **FRIGHT** where we begin to wonder just how and why Collinson involved himself with this project and how far he can go with this material before it collapses around him, Collinson suddenly shifts both the speed and direction of his film to focus on his characters, who have been, up to this point, lazily and superficially drawn.

Each of the characters is thus pulled into the steaming violence which occupies the second half of **FRIGHT**, and we finally recognize Collinson's motives and interests as he exhaustively probes their actions and non-actions in this most decisive moment in their lives when they all converge upon the Lloyd house. We are transported back again into the muggy, intense, and highly sexualized atmosphere of Collinson's admirable first film, **THE PENTHOUSE**. In doing so, the conventional horror elements seem merely foisted onto **FRIGHT**'s true concerns, done perhaps to attract the genre audience that apparently shunned **THE PENTHOUSE**.

Just as **THE PENTHOUSE** made nearly unbearably explicit the beautifully understated theme of the possessive-obsessive quality of evil and its seductively attractive banality as in Joseph Losey's masterpiece **THE SERVANT** (1964), so does **FRIGHT** appallingly simplify the same theme from its use in **THE PENTHOUSE**. The Wheel of Fortune is decisively falling for each of the char-

Above, scenes from **FRIGHT**, directed by Peter Collinson, currently in release through Allied Artists. Left: Unsuspecting Amanda (Susan George) is comforted by psychopath Brian (Ian Bannen) when she discovers the unconscious body of her boyfriend (Dennis Waterman). Right: Brian holds a jagged piece of mirror glass at the throat of his own son when surrounded and threatened by the police, a frightened, confused and pathetic figure. In **FRIGHT**, director Peter Collinson covers much the same thematic ground as in his first feature film **THE PENTHOUSE**.

acters; **FRIGHT** through its second half examines the inability of its characters to act effectively under stress, just as we have witnessed Amanda's gradual loss of control through the first half. Dr. Cordell has seen his self complacency blasted apart and his care and counseling of Helen nullified. Helen's husband-to-be Jim joins the police detective in a shallow moral cowardice that impedes their actions; the detective especially worsens matters in his empty authoritarian attempts to rescue Amanda and Tara from Brian's control. Helen, of course, with the bloody return of Brian, has had her very worst fears and imaginings and guilts deeply confirmed; her psychic damage will be considerable. Amanda's friend Chris has been savagely beaten twice and has probably died for his romantic-chivalric attitudes toward Amanda. Amanda herself has journeyed through a circus of torture finalized by a PG-rated rape scene; she finally fires the fatal shots into Brian that end the nightmare. No one escapes unscathed except possibly Tara although Collinson and Gates have Amanda sob apologies to the child during the ending scene which indicates that the long night will prove traumatic for him as well. Thus, all these characters in **FRIGHT**, sharing the central action of **THE PENTHOUSE**, join into a massively mindless state of breakdown and brain-killing terror where all values and shades of moral meaning are hopelessly blurred. This motif is clearly what intrigues and, I suspect, somewhat frightens Collinson.

Actually, unlike **THE PENTHOUSE**, there is no initial evil in **FRIGHT**, unless we accept as such the escaped mental patient Brian. Collinson argues against this assumption, however, in his extremely empathetic and ultimately pathetically embarrassing treatment of Brian and Ian Bannen's quirky portrayal. Collinson seems not to exert much leavening control over any of his actors, allowing them to excessively overplay their roles. Granting this, the fact that the first half of **FRIGHT** plays so ineffectively is due to Collinson and Susan George's failure to create the crucial sympathetic character with whom the audience must identify. Probably the fault lies more with the director when one remembers her perform-





## MACBETH

...a sop to the critical establishment's stultifying view of what constitutes art.

When Roman Polanski's first feature, *KNIFE IN THE WATER*, gained international distribution, critics in this country and Great Britain welcomed it with open arms and rave reviews. His second film, *REPULSION*, sent these same critics searching for qualifications. Sure it was a top notch exercise in screen terror, but what did that amount to? Even Polanski's chief champion, the English critic Kenneth Tynan, expressed concern that Polanski was abusing his gifts by dabbling in so trivial a genre as "the horror film." And that criticism has persisted from *CUL-DE-SAC* to *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS* to *ROSEMARY'S BABY*—until now.

*MACBETH*, Polanski's long awaited new film shows the influence of this criticism. Prior to the tragic murder of his wife, Sharon Tate, Polanski had not announced *MACBETH* as one of his projects. At the time of her death, he was working on a screenplay based on Robert Merle's science fiction thriller *DAY OF THE DOLPHINS*. Also on his schedule: a film about the disastrous Donner Party expedition and a biography of Paganini. According to Polanski, *MACBETH* suddenly arose from a need following his wife's death to make a film of greater significance. I'm sure Polanski is sincere in what he says, but I also think—particularly in view of critic Tynan's association as co-screenwriter—that Polanski, perhaps unconsciously, was talked into *MACBETH*. And the result is a sop to the critical establishment's stultifying view of what constitutes art, a technically superb piece of moviemaking, and second-rate Polanski.

While most reviewers are judging the film in relation to its source, I think even the most liberal Shakespearean will find little of interest in Polanski's *MACBETH*. It's finest moments are pure Polanski, having little or nothing to do with the Bard. So impressive are the film's visuals, in fact, that they tend to make one tune out the dialogue altogether—and what could possibly be more catastrophic to Shakespeare!

*MACBETH* is only the second film Polanski has adapted from existing material, but in this case it is the source itself which has prevented him from making a completely satisfying film. *ROSEMARY'S BABY*, his first adaptation, may

Scenes from Roman Polanski's *MACBETH*, a Playboy Production currently in release through Columbia Pictures. Left: Macbeth (Jon Finch) is captivated by his own reflection in a murky cauldron's depths and sees in it the makings of a king. Right: The three witches bury a severed hand on the beach. The film's finest moments are pure Polanski, their success having little or nothing to do with Shakespeare.

have seemed slavishly faithful to the book by Ira Levin, but close analysis reveals that the two works are not totally alike. Levin's book was about witchcraft. Polanski's film, like his earlier *REPULSION*, was about a girl's subconscious mental conflict—in this case Rosemary's inner torment at being unable to reconcile her strict religious upbringing with her adult agnostic desires. This change of intent and its surrealistic treatment brought the story firmly into the thematic domain of Polanski's earlier films and resulted in a film that may not have been Kenneth Tynan's definition of art, but was nevertheless a highly personal statement by Polanski. And I ask you: how much of the film's dialogue do you remember?

Thematically, Polanski covers no new personal ground in *MACBETH*—except, perhaps, in the area of violence. *MACBETH* is bloodier than all his other films put together. But hideous though Duncan's mutilation, Banquo's death by battleaxe, and Macbeth's decapitation may be, they carry no sting. All the carnage and cruelty of Macbeth's savage times are treated coolly as facts of life—which was not the case in Polanski's earlier films. Why? Suffice to say that for Polanski it expresses a kind of resignation to the existence of violence.

Polanski's couples are always significantly mismatched due to the obsession of one partner (or both) for his or her opposite, as witness the self-destructive attractions of the intellectual George for the physical Teresa in *CUL-DE-SAC*, the sexually insecure Andrzej for the self-assured Christine in *KNIFE IN THE WATER*, the deeply Catholic and unselfish Rosemary for the agnostic and ambitious Guy in *ROSEMARY'S BABY* all the way to the absurdly fatal pairing of the vampire killer Alfred with the undead Anna in *THE FEARLESS VAMPIRE KILLERS*.

Macbeth and his lady are no different, his being a warrior and mud-wallower and her being a social climber with a taste for finer things. Their relationship spells disaster for others but mostly for themselves, a theme which runs throughout all of Polanski's work—even *REPULSION* where the relationship between Carol and Colin leads to his brutal murder (by her) and her descent into total, irrevocable madness.

And consistent with these other elements, the vivid "personality" given the Scottish landscape is also a distinctly Polanskian characteristic. The various locations in which all his films have taken place have all acted as antagonists, pushing the characters towards death and destruction. Polanski's superstitious Scottish highlands, forever drenched in rain and struck by fearsome lightning is quite obviously another use of this antagonistic landscape motif.

All of which make the physical elements of this *MACBETH* very Polanski. But, alas, there is still that Shakespearean prose to contend with. It's against everything Roman Polanski is as a filmmaker.

Kenneth Tynan, please take note!

John McCarty

For cast and credit information see David Bartholomew's review of *MACBETH* in Vol 2 No 2.

ance under Sam Peckinpah in *STRAW DOGS* as the teasing sex object and provocative succubus guaranteed to drive not only the would-be villains of that film but also most males in the audience up the nearest wall or at least into the closest cold shower. Even Suzy Kendall in *THE PENTHOUSE* set her sexuality as the mainspring of the thematic material, an idea only hinted at in the Amanda and Helen roles of *FRIGHT*.

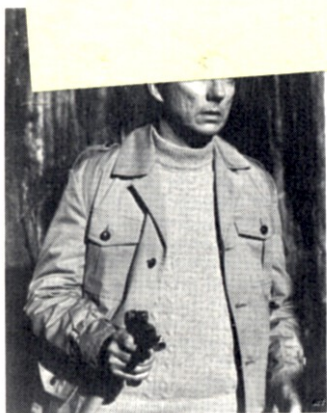
The second half of the film continues Collinson's exaggerated stylistics. The cross-cutting technique, the most basic construct of *FRIGHT*, is altered deftly: before, Collinson cut back and forth rhythmically between Amanda at the house and the trio at dinner and on the way to rescue. Now he cuts within the failing mind of Brian between Helen and Amanda as Brian confuses their images and identities. The pace slows still further and combined with the extended use of close-ups (concentrating now more on faces than objects) and the overblown performances, the film builds an excruciatingly turgid, suffocating atmosphere. When the final and welcome obliterated image fades on the screen, one breathes much easier. Wallowing in this opulent sea of anxiety-producing images proves that Collinson is something of a craftsman, if only in his ability to elicit nausea from his audience. The demanding trip through the same stylistic and psychic territory was well worth it in *THE PENTHOUSE*, but here it sadly is not.

Whatever else one may say of Peter Collinson, he does have a transmittably orgiastic flair for the sadistic. But whether or not we are ready for it is quite another question.

David Bartholomew







Bryant Haliday.

**HORROR ON SNAPE ISLAND** A Fanfare Corp. Release. 5/72. In Color. 88 minutes. Produced by Richard Gordon. Directed and written by Jim O'Connolly from a story by George Baxt. With: Bryant Haliday, Jill Hayworth, Anna Palk, Jack Watson, Mark Edwards.

This shocker is, theoretically, like a maze. You go through a few curves, a few plot casualties, a few sharp bends and once you reach the heart of the problem, it's all over. The film first shows us a fisherman and his son finding a couple of corpses—and then they are found by a foaming, savage, and quite naked female who has been driven to madness and cannibalism. From this little adventure, we find ourselves involved with an ancient Phoenician axe, and so on. Despite the constant alterations in the plot-line, and possibly due to them, the film is never really as boring as it sounds.

Bryant Haliday is still an interesting actor with an intriguing face. It's kind of thin and nullifying, somehow. He comes on like James Bond in this film, and despite how much he does not fit the role, he makes the film curiously inventive. Jill Hayworth adds an aura of cheerfulness to the otherwise brooding atmosphere with her bright/happy appearance.

It's not one of the year's best. It isn't a classic horror tale. It's not really even a cinematic exercise. But it is an entertaining little shocker.

Tim Lucas

**GODZILLA VS. THE SMOG MONSTER** An AIP Release. 2/72. In Color. 87 minutes. A Toho Co. Production. Directed by Yoshimitsu Banno. Screenplay by Kaoru Mabuchi, Yoshimitsu Banno. With: A. Yamauchi, H. Kawase.

Godzilla, who has survived his epic confrontations with King Kong, The Thing (i.e. Mothra), Ghidrah and Raymond Burr, now tackles a new enemy—Hedorah, a slimy creature "born of sludge, fed by pollution." As a public service, American International Pictures ("born of low-budgets, fed by money-coining gimmicks") is releasing this regulation Toho hodge-podge in the U.S. with the addition of a topical, totally forgettable theme song "Save the Earth." Millions of Americans, keenly concerned with the problem of pollution, will respond to this feature by viewing it at a drive-in theatre where they will dump their soft drink cups and popcorn boxes out the car window.

Robert L. Jerome

**THE GROUNDSTAR CONSPIRACY** A Universal Release. 5/72. In Technicolor and Panavision. 96 minutes. Produced by Hal Roach. Directed by Lamont Johnson. Written by Matthew Howard based on the novel *The Alien* by L. P. Davies. With: George Peppard, Michael Sarrazin, Christine Bellford, Cliff Potts, James Olson.

# NOTICES

A very unusual mixture of science fiction, TV-movie suspense and melodrama, and bizarre mysteries all happening either at once or separately make this more than an adequate programmer.

Possessed of an incredibly involved and complex plot structure, and an ending one couldn't possibly figure out entirely before its unveiling, several stodgy scenes from the second-to-fourth reels and a strong lack of visual and directorial inspiration by Lamont Johnson, allays the film's initial formula for complete success as entertainment.

Yet though the film falls down time and again, George Peppard pulls it together with the most ingenious and unusual characterization of his career. For Peppard's cool, masterful villainy, the film is worth the price of admission.

Dale Winogura

**TWINS OF EVIL** A Universal Release. 6/72. In Color. 80 minutes. A Hammer Films Production. Produced by Harry Fine and Michael Style. Directed by John Hough. Written by Tudor Gates. With: Peter Cushing, Dennis Price, Mary and Madeleine Collinson.

Mary and Frieda Gellhorn, the almost identical ornaments in this Hammer horror, are a pair of bosomy orphans who arrive at a middle European village of the last century to stay with a distant uncle. Their arrival does not go unnoticed by the male residents, not so much because there is a lack of pretty girls in the vicinity, but because the female population is steadily declining as night-riding vigilantes search out solitary young women, denounce them as witches and burn them at the stake. Add to this the presence of a young nobleman who worships the devil and takes Frieda as his consort, and the situation is ripe for one of those classic which-twin-is-which? mixups which sees Mary tied to the stake for Frieda's misdeeds.

The film is done with Hammer's obvious care for details and a sobriety which creates the proper mood of unexpected evil in attractive, tranquil surroundings. It is also well played, mostly at a gallop, by Madeleine and

Mary Collinson, as the lovely double-dish of feminine splendor; Damien Thomas, as the pleasure-mad Count Karnstein; Dennis Price, as the neighborhood flesh-peddler, and Peter Cushing, the grand old man of British fright films, who gives the twisted witch-hunting uncle an almost sympathetic bent as he travels the lonely road of evil-doing in the Lord's name.

Robert L. Jerome

**TOWER OF SCREAMING VIRGINS** A Maron Film Release. 11/71. In Eastman Color. 90 minutes. Produced by Wolf C. Hartwig. Directed by Francois Le Grand. Based on the story "The Tower of Nesle" by Alexandre Dumas. With: Terry Torday, Jean Piat, Uschi Glas, Veronique Vendell, Marie Anies.

This badly dubbed German film was made, according to the credits, in 1968. The production appears to be a French period epic but it winds up better resembling a deflated comma.

The film's chief claim to the horror genre is a bit of fluff concerning a stone fortress called the Tower of Sienna, to which young French noblemen are enticed for the Queen and her courtesans' nightly pleasure; the victims are then grotesquely dispatched the next morning in a river flowing, conveniently, nearby. The "virgins" of the unhappy title refer to these young gentlemen and not, as an interested voyeur might imagine, to young women.

The feature is beefed up considerably by various bosomy young things who all strain to be sexy and/or evil and who succeed only sporadically in either category. The main villain strives to be merely evil and doesn't bare his chest at all; for his troubles in this endeavor he receives the obligatory knife in the back in the final reel.

The usual horror film trappings pandered to in the first reels (e.g. the peasants' belief, nurtured from fishing bodies out of the river, that the Queen is a witch) are soon reduced to an inept melee of nude-from-the-waist-up sex and badly choreographed action sequences. The film is about one notch above the level of technical shoddiness, which is about the greatest compliment it can be paid.

David Bartholomew

Madeleine Collinson as the bad twin in *TWINS OF EVIL*.



Peter Cushing.

**TALES FROM THE CRYPT** A Cine-rama Release. 3/72. In Eastman Color. 92 minutes. An Amicus Production for MetroMedia Producers Corp. Produced by Milton Subotsky and Max J. Rosenberg. Directed by Freddie Francis. Written by Milton Subotsky. With: Peter Cushing, Ralph Richardson, Richard Greene, Joan Collins, Ian Hendry, Nigel Patrick, Patrick Magee.

Milton Subotsky's screenplay is based on five stories which appeared in the horror comics of the '50s "Tales from the Crypt" and "Vault of Horror." These comics featured tales of terror unencumbered by the usual moralizing in today's films. Each is so well adapted here that this latest Amicus anthology doesn't have a slow moment in its 92 minute running time. "Poetic Justice" is the best of five tales, starring Peter Cushing as the aged Grimsdyke, a local junk man beloved by the neighborhood children but hated by his neighbor, played by Robin Phillips, who coldly drives him to suicide to obtain his property. Director Freddie Francis puts a competent cast briskly thru their paces enlisting the finest performance from Cushing. The veteran actor has appeared in both of Amicus' previous anthologies and here presents a character both pathetic and noble. As the persecuted junk man Cushing maintains his dignity as his world crumbles around him. The horror story, by its very nature, is probably most effective in short form, and here, Amicus has assembled their finest anthology ever.

Dan Scapperotti

**LADY FRANKENSTEIN** A New World Pictures Release. 3/72. In Metrocolor. 85 minutes. Produced by Harry Cushing. Directed by Mel Wells. With: Joseph Cotton, Sarah Bay, Mickey Haggerty, Paul Muller.

After 30 minutes of this Spanish horror, Joseph Cotton as the good/bad doctor creates his artificial man. The creature, in what looks like a congratulatory embrace, promptly squeezes his creator to death. Thus actor Cotton is spared the further embarrassment of reamining to the end (lucky fellow), and the movie itself proceeds about its principal business, which is marketing nudity and violence.

The monster, running amok, provides the violence, and the doctor's hot-blooded daughter (Sarah Bay) provides most of the bare flesh as she carries on her father's late experiments. In order to destroy the first monster, she hastily decides to create her own unique lover by placing the brain of the old lab assistant she trusts into the body of the young man she desires. She succeeds beyond her wildest expectations, but the testy villagers interrupt her big nude love scene by storming the castle with torches lighted. Could they be censors in disguise or merely disgruntled onlookers who have had enough of a bad thing?

Robert L. Jerome





Woody Allen gets some advice from Bogey in **PLAY IT AGAIN SAM**.

**WEREWOLVES ON WHEELS** A Fanfare Release. 11/71. In DeLuxe Color. 84 minutes. Produced by Paul Lewis. Directed by Michael LeVesque. With: D. J. Anderson, Severn Darden.

Given the title and the circumstances which justify it (motorcycle gang locks horns with a cult of Devil-worshippers who turn the bikers into real beasts), most moviegoers would tag the film, sight unseen, as junk. They're right!

Robert L. Jerome

**DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN** An American International Pictures Release. 7/72. In Color by DeLuxe. 89 minutes. Produced by Louis M. Heyward. Directed by Robert Fuest. Screenplay by Robert Brees and Robert Fuest. With: Vincent Price, Robert Quarry, Valli Kemp, Flora Lewis, Hugh Griffith.

Virtually all of the same problems that plagued **THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES** are present in its sequel, and then some. Not only does it lack the cohesion and consistency of style and pacing as the original did, but there's none of the witty inventiveness and ghoulish charm that characterized the sequence of events, and especially the murders, except for the first one. If Robert Fuest's idea of wit is to have a scorpion drop down a victim's pants, then his judgement is as badly suspect as his taste.

The first reel or so, and some of the climactic moments, have some of the satiric, throwaway relish of the original, but when fine talents like Vincent Price and Robert Quarry are all but thrown away in such mediocrity, the praise begins to level itself. Director Fuest has yet to prove he can be as consistently talented as he is in bits and pieces.

Dale Winogura

Vincent Price.



**PLAY IT AGAIN SAM** A Paramount Pictures Release. 5/72. In Technicolor. 86 minutes. An APJAC Production in association with Rollins-Joffe Productions. Directed by Herbert Ross. Written by Woody Allen based on his play. With: Woody Allen, Diane Keaton, Tony Roberts, Jerry Lacy, Joy Bang.

Woody Allen has made here the quintessential expression of the oft-used theme of an individual living within his own private fantasy world, used to good effect in such films as **MORGAN**, **BILLY LIAR**, and recently **DEEP END**. While the theme has often been played for haunting tragedy and pathos to good effect, Allen fashions it here for hilarious comedy which points, parable-like, to a moral lesson: be thyself. Allen plays a film-buff who idolizes and attempts to emulate Humphrey Bogart, right down to memorizing the actor's lines from **CASABLANCA** and other films and using them in everyday conversation. This mania becomes so consuming that he soon begins to see and converse with Bogart (in the person of actor Jerry Lacy) as his hero pops up in the most unexpected places to perk up his spirits and give him pointers to prop up his sagging love-life. The film climaxes with Allen living through a real-life reenactment of the conclusion of **CASABLANCA** in which he follows his own instincts rather than the Bogart cues, to bask in the admiration of his own mentor who exclaims "You did real good kid," finally coming to a fledgling realization of his own identity. Allen's zany humor prevents his message from being merely sophomoric, and his conceptualization of the intermingling of the real world with the film world of fantasy makes his film fascinating *cinéfantastique*.

Frederick S. Clarke

**SWEET KILL** A New World Pictures Release. 2/72. In Color. 87 minutes. Produced by Tamara Asseyev. Written and directed by Curtis Hanson. With: Tab Hunter, Cherie Latimer, Nadyne Turner, Isabel Jewel, Linda Leider.

In this halfway decent chiller, Tab Hunter brings a high degree of conviction to a difficult part. Cast as a healthy-looking gym teacher at a California high school, Hunter is crippled by psychological impotence. A close friendship with a fellow tenant (well played by Nadyne Turner) at his seaside apartment has reached the stage where she is wondering why their relationship has not ripened, and when a casual pickup on the beach attempts unsuccessfully to arouse him, he lashes out and accidentally kills her.

This, of course, opens up a new avenue of stimulation to him, and two more girls—openly brazen with their favors—are brutally dispatched by him as his obsession grows. In time the

viewer learns the source of his emotional troubles (spelled M-O-M), and this bit of ancient news only reinforces the notion that this film is actually **SON OF PSYCHO**.

Director Curtis (Lee) Hanson is a film critic and former editor of "Cinema" magazine. Working on a limited budget with lots of compensatory energy, he gives his Hitchcock-and-bull story a spoonful of suspense, a touch of terror, and the feeling that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Still, despite the copycat appearance, Hanson fashions a central character who has tragic intensity to grip the viewer and demand his pity. Of necessity, some of the film's more interesting relationships—the hero's fondness for the "mature" lady downstairs, his locker-room talks with an insecure youth, who cannot guess Hunter's own insecurity, and the cruel yet amusing sessions with a bored prostitute who resents having to wear Mom's old dress—are given the short shrift in order to have the time to stage the various murders, but Hanson is able to suggest their meaning in the larger mosaic of the hero's madness.

And in his star, the director has chosen wisely. Hunter is, without reservations, the film's principal asset, giving the deranged hero the eerie look of glazed wax fruit which has begun to melt into a horrible distortion of reality. The film's last scene, with Hunter alone in a pigeon roost, is proof positive the nay-sayers have buried this actor's career prematurely.

Robert L. Jerome

**THE PIED PIPER** A Paramount Pictures Release. 4/72. In Color. 90 minutes. Produced by David Puttnam. Directed by Jacques Demy. Written by Andrew Birkin, Jacques Demy and Mark Peploe. With: Donovan, Donald Pleasence, Jack Wild, John Hurt.

If there is any director who is equipped to tell the famous legend of the piper who rid a German town of rats among other things, it is Jacques Demy. He has made the definitive version of the classic tale, with his usual graceful beauty and simplicity of storytelling that is absolutely right.

Unlike the slick, dazzling visual surface of another marvelous film of his, the as yet unreleased **PEAU D'ÂNE** (Donkey Skin), the visual style here is dark, raw, and bleak. The difference here is between legend of folklore and fairytale, and it's a big, obvious difference. Demy even manages to make the unflattering atmosphere elegant because he knows just how to use it.

Donovan is the perfect, sexless image of the piper, and Donald Pleasence is often hilarious as the inept, ignorant ruler of the city. But the film belongs to Demy and, even though Para-



Donovan.

mount displayed its faith by dumping it in multiples in L.A. for one week, it deserves not only to be a children's film classic, but a classic of the fantasy film.

Dale Winogura

**BEWARE! THE BLOB** A Jack H. Harris Enterprises Release. 6/72. In Color by DeLuxe. 87 minutes. Produced by Anthony Harris. Directed by Larry Hagman. Written by Jack Woods and Anthony Harris. With: Robert Walker, Gwynne Gilford, Richard Webb.

The oozy red gelatin which gave Steve McQueen's career a boost in 1958 is back, or rather, its offspring, which bears an unfortunate resemblance to Strawberry Jello and, to uncharitable eyes, comes across about as threateningly as a fattening dessert.

Saddled with such a funky project, director/actor Larry Hagman attempts to compensate with diversionary tactics, including a couple of guest stars (Carol Lynley, Burgess Meredith) who exist solely to be devoured by the insatiable Blob; some guest comedians (Godfrey Cambridge, Shelley Berman and Fred Smoot), who do their turns before they, too, end up as fodder for the rampaging one-cell creature, and a few funny surprises like the extra who vainly holds up a crucifix to ward off impending doom. As the youthful hero of the piece, Robert Walker (Jr.), who is a "son of" himself, reads his lines with apparent disinterest, but newcomer Gwynne Gilford puts some necessary pep into the heroine, and she has a humdinger of a scene where, in the midst of a noisy party, she begins to go to pieces with fright. Seemingly designed for adolescent audiences, the film is certainly tame in its approach.

Robert L. Jerome

Tab Hunter gives an exceptional performance as a psychopath in **SWEET KILL**.





# NEWS AND NOTES

## SENSE OF WONDER

Welcome to the seventh issue of CINEFANTASTIQUE, the magazine with a "sense of wonder," devoted to the study of horror, fantasy and science fiction films. We would like to welcome two new National Distributors with this issue who are now making copies of CINEFANTASTIQUE available to any interested retail newsdealer throughout the United States and Canada. They are: B. DeBoer Distributors, who has always given us excellent coverage in Manhattan and whose distribution now extends throughout the United States; and Capital Distributing Company (Canada) Ltd., who now distribute CINEFANTASTIQUE throughout Canada. If you have come by this issue of CINEFANTASTIQUE other than by buying it at the newsstand and you would like to have CINEFANTASTIQUE on sale in your city, then let your local newsdealer know that you would buy the magazine if he would stock it, and show him the address of his distributor, listed in the colophon on the contents page.

Stuart A. Kaminsky is a new contributor and offers an analysis of everyone's favorite Don Siegel film, *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*, along with an interview with Siegel concerning the film, excerpted from his forthcoming book on Siegel's career. An aspect of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* of growing interest and controversy is the extent and nature of Sam Peckinpah's contribution to the film. Don Siegel's views on this subject are made evident in Kaminsky's interview, and the following interesting tidbit came to light in a recent letter from Stuart:

"An interesting addendum, which you may wish to include, involves Sam Peckinpah's part in writing *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. As you know, Siegel claims he wrote none of it with the possible exception of contributions to a scene. I just received from Sam Peckinpah an afterword for my book on Siegel in which he writes: 'he (Don Siegel) dragged me to Wanger's home and fought until I got my first opportunity to work as a screenwriter (a week's polish on *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*).' You are, by the way, welcome to use the above quote from Peckinpah. I talked to Siegel yesterday and he flatly contradicted the Peckinpah statement, a copy of which he had. All this may be too minute to interest your readers, but it is one of

the many facets of the creation of the film which intrigues me."

During a recent seminar on "The Gangster Film," held this past summer at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Stuart and I managed to get screenwriter Daniel Mainwaring's views on the subject. Mainwaring had been invited to the seminar to give the inside story on the production of several of the films on which he worked, and after a day's session he was only too accommodating to discuss his own contribution to cinefantastique (*SPACE MASTER X-7*, *THE MINOTAUR*, *ATLANTIS*, *THE LOST CONTINENT*), particularly *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS*. On Peckinpah's involvement with the film he informed us:

"He wrote two lines! One line I remember vividly, because I said 'Where in hell did that come from!' when I saw the preview. That was the line when the doctor is with the girl and he says: 'I'm pushing appendectomies this week.' And I said: 'Where did that come from. I didn't write that shit!' It was Peckinpah who wrote it and Don said he thought it was pretty good. This was the first time I knew that Peckinpah had written any lines in it. I didn't know that Peckinpah had had a hand in it at all, because there wasn't anything he did in it. He didn't do anything, except make trouble for me. Apparently after I left it, Don was preparing and was going to use Peckinpah as dialogue director but he couldn't put him to work until they started production, so Peckinpah was out of work for a couple of weeks. Peckinpah conned Don and Wanger into putting him on the payroll as a writer to fix the script, and he did nothing except two or three bad lines of dialogue that he put in. He didn't do a thing."

"He was the dialogue director and they used anybody that was on the payroll so they wouldn't have to pay another actor. That's how he got to play the gas-meter reader. They were paying him a hundred a week and that would have meant paying thirty five dollars to an actor to do that. So he did it."

"Do you know what dialogue direction is? I've done it. You hold the script and the actors read it back and forth and you see whether they've learned it or not. That's all. Shit, if you told them how to say it, they would throw the script at you and throw you out the window and the director would come in and beat you over the head with a chair! No kidding. A dialogue director doesn't do anything. He just sees that they know their lines. That was Peckinpah's contribution to the film. He was the dialogue director."

Mainwaring is aging into his sixties but is full of life and humor and wonderful stories about Hollywood. He is one of the friendliest and unpretentious people you would want to meet and a Hollywood archetype with his knit shirt and sports coat that is at once casual, classy and loud, his unvarnished language and his openness, and his demeanor, a Hollywood swagger that fits a pattern, right down to carrying a bottle of whiskey in his suitcase. After a very pleasant evening and dinner I left him by saying: "Mr. Mainwaring, it has been fascinating meeting you," to which he replied in a friendly way: "Oh bullshit!"

Also featured this issue is Tony Scott's interview with director George A. Romero, whose *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* has become an accepted horror classic in just four years. The interview discusses his other films as well, and as they are as yet unreleased we were unable to obtain stills from them for publication, however we did manage to uncover several from *NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD* that have not been used before. Romero comes across as a very interesting and a very promising purveyor of cinefantastique.

Christopher Lee and Anthony Nelson Keys have formed their own production company, Charlemagne Productions, as reported in a feature by our English correspondents. We wish them Luck!

## TRIESTE '72

When a film festival reaches its 10th edition that should be proof enough that the festival is alive and well. I pondered this thought on my way to the Tenth International Science Fiction Film Festival held annually in July at the Italian seaport of Trieste. I hoped, naively, that producers would now begin to have faith in the festival and would send their best works for representation. That all the years of missing major works like 2001, *THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN* and *A CLOCKWORK ORANGE* were over and that the Trieste festival would become a real science fiction film festival and not merely the festival of minor science fiction films. But Trieste is the same as ever and this fact is not the fault of the festival organizers who do their best to make the festival a success.

Universal Pictures is the only major American company represented this year, and with the best film screened at the festival, Douglas Trumbull's *SILENT RUNNING* (reviewed 2:2:8 and in this issue, page 44), a very sensitive and sincere film about loneliness and ecology with Bruce Dern. Later we shall see that Dern was left out in the distribution of the prizes.

America was also represented with *BEWARE THE BLOB* (reviewed this issue, page 37), the second film about the Blob but not a sequel to the first. The film is a series of episodes linked by their tragic endings involving the Blob, and the film is a tasteful blend of horror and humor. The initial episode involving comic Godfrey Cambridge is a minor masterpiece.

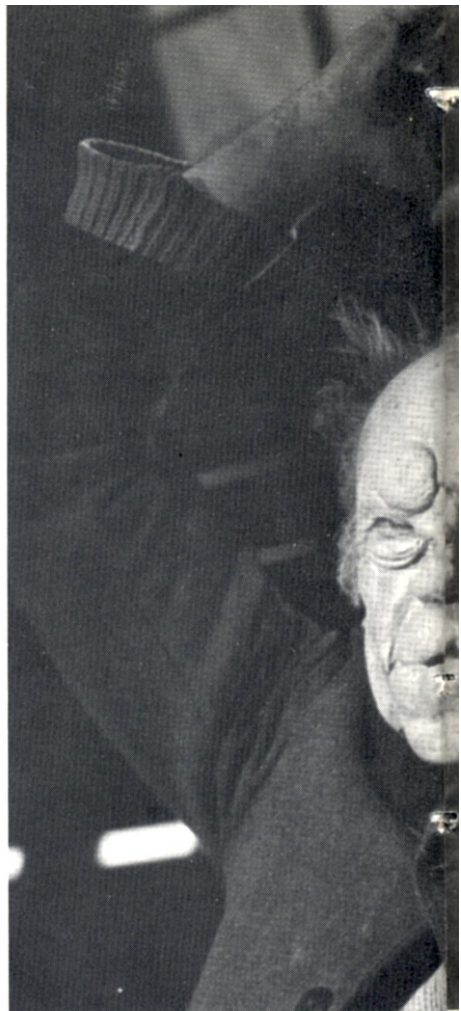
*NEC-RO-MAN-CY*, also representing America, was a disappointment to everyone despite its link with the prestigious name of Orson Welles and that of its producer, Bert I. Gordon. As Welles is always a delight, the failure of the film speaks very poorly for Gordon and his attempt to showcase the film's special effects.

*THE BROTHERHOOD OF SATAN* (reviewed 2:1:38) hardly seems appropriate for a science fiction film festival, but is interesting for its ingenious series of murders and its victory for the forces of evil. This entry from Columbia Pictures also represented the United States.

England was represented by one lone entry, *DOOMWATCH* from Tigon British Films and producer Tony Tenser, a very conventional story about an ecological disaster made in very conventional terms by director Peter Sasdy. It is based on the successful British television series of the same name and concerns a small island off the west coast of Britain where people are suffering a deforming disease caused by eating fish contaminated with industrial waste. The film re-teams Ian Bannen and Judy Geeson who recently appeared together in *FRIGHT* and features a cameo appearance by the late George Sanders.

Czechoslovakia entered with *DIVKA NA KOSTETI* (*The Girl On The Broom*) made by Vaclav Vorcilek who entered the festival last year with his incredible *MISTER, YOU'RE A WIDOW!* In the kingdom of the witches a young girl studies witchcraft but is a bad student with only one desire: to go to Earth. She finds the magic words that will fulfill her dream by accident and transports herself to Earth by magic, and after many adventures discovers a new magic word, "love." Vorcilek's film is as dynamic as his entry last year and proves that this scripter of many Czech films also has great talent as a director.

*SHAG S KRISHI* (*Only Some Steps from the Roof*) is the feature film entry from Russia, the tale of a young boy travelling through time. The boy makes appearances in prehistoric times, in Paris during the time of the Three Musketeers and in Russia during the revolution. Each time he distracts the





Scenes from the entries of the Tenth Annual Science Fiction Film Festival at Trieste. Top: DOOMWATCH (England). Middle Left: HET LAASTE OORDEEL (Belgium). Middle Right: GOKE, BODY SNATCHER FROM HELL (Japan). Bottom: SHAG S KRYSHI (U.S.S.R.).

lives of the people he meets in describing what the future will be like. Unfortunately the film preoccupies itself with propagandizing its audience in a most blatant manner, and the performance of Mitia Nikolaiev as the young boy, which was awarded the festival's prize for best performance by an actor, is as obvious and old fashioned as the film itself.

GOKE, BODY SNATCHER FROM HELL represented Japan. I recall seeing the film over two years ago in London and the Japanese distributors show disrespect for the festival by entering such an old film. Director Hajime Sato makes an extraordinary film that is a mixture of horror, science fiction and politics. Politics enters the film via the character of a young American woman going to Vietnam to claim the body of her dead husband. Sato injects documentary footage and stills of dead soldiers and civilians of both sides of the conflict. Unfortunately the acting is forced and often hysterical, a characteristic of nearly all Japanese films and a heritage from their theatre, but the handling of the horror theme and the special effects are excellent. As I remember, the London screening shortened his pessimistic ending which depicts the freezing of our planet.

The Belgo-Italian entry, ON DEVIL'S SERVICE had previously been screened at the First French Convention of Cinema Fantastique in May held in Nanterre, France. The film is one of the first French language horror films and is disappointing for its primitive shock techniques. The Italian version is said to be more complete, due to French censorship, and perhaps more satisfying.

The entries from France were no surprise for a Frenchman. The film LE SEUIL DU VIDE (The Threshold of the Void), directed by Jean-Francois Davy is still without a National distributor but has been extensively shown in France at conventions and private screenings. It is the same case with the other French entry, LES SOLEILS DE L'ILE DE PAQUES (The Sun of Easter Island), directed by Pierre Kast, which attempts to fictionally answer the mystery of the monolithic stone heads of Easter Island. The film is a provocative work of intelligence that makes for an excellent conversation piece among intellectuals, but its low-key, non-sensationalized and serious approach to the subject matter make it a poor entry for the commercial market and popular audiences, who might well imagine it to be an actual documentary. The film fails on minor details in its editing and continuity, but succeeds as a work of subtlety and intelligence that will not satisfy itself with the easy and obvious images of "little green men" and "flying saucers."

If the feature film selections were not as numerous or as carefully selected as one would have wanted, the short films made up for it.

OPERATION X 70 from Belgium is about the accidental dropping of a gas on a friendly country. It puts the citizens in a trance-like state of happiness and contentment.

HET LAASTE OORDEEL (The Last Judgement), also from Belgium and also about gas, is a little morality tale. While the populace at large is forced to survive the ravages of a deadly gas, the political leaders have taken refuge in the safety of an atomic shelter. A choice then becomes available to them: they can release a substance found to counteract the effects of the gas but which will destroy all life on earth, or they can remain forever in their shelter, for they have not undergone the

same transformation as the surface population that has survived. The various members of the sequestered group including the politicians, the military, the clergy and the scientists argue over what action to take.

Canada entered three animated short films: EVOLUTION, a cartoon about Darwinian theory, PARADISE LOST, on the destruction of nature by defoliants, and SYNCHROMY, a new graphic design work by Norman McLaren. Bulgaria was also represented by an animated short: AMBASSADOR FROM THE STARS by Christo Topouzanov, about the inability of man to comprehend alien intelligence.

England presented ARTHUR C. CLARKE: A BIOGRAPHY which, surprisingly, had little interest in science fiction.

Three shorts from Italy included: PREGHIERA DELLA NOTTE (Prayer In The Night), a meditation on the destiny of man which takes a mystical turn at the end showing the last man on earth kneeling down against the night sky in prayer, ILMURO (The Wall), an animated cartoon about a painter who paints the horrors of war, and ECCE HOMO (This Is Man), a coproduction with Yugoslavia, showing the evolution of a human being from birth to death. While Italy was well represented by the short films it seems strange that Italian directors like Bava, Freda and Margheriti are not represented in an Italian film festival.

Yugoslavia was also represented by PUTOVANJE (The Journey), concerning a train whose passengers disappear one by one leaving it to arrive empty at its destination. STOP 15, from Switzerland, was a documentary on the Swiss watch industry introduced on the pretext of time coming to a stop. An unscheduled entry from Poland was entitled PRZEKLADANIE (The Grafting), a satirical film concerning organ transplants in which the recipient begins to take on the habits of the donor. The latter was directed by A. Wajda, the most renowned of Polish directors, but not with the talent for which he is well known.

America entered: AND THEN THEY FORGOT GOD, LOOK BACK HOME, FLIGHT, WINDFALL FROM SPACE, SPACE IN THE 70S - EXPLORATION OF THE PLANETS and YANOMAMA: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY STUDY, all scientific documentaries and each more boring than the last. Also entered was J-WALKER, an amusing satire of regimentation in society, about a man

who likes to cross in the middle of the street.

EZUSTINAJON (Action Silver Monkey), from Hungary, pointed to the confusion and absurdity in modern life by observing society from the point of view of an extra-terrestrial in our midst.

The now traditional retrospective of fantastic films was the worst in memory and lasted only six days, concentrating on the subject of "the devil sorcerers and witches," and offering: SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN (B. Christiansen, 1929), SORROWS OF SATAN (D. W. Griffith, 1925), FROLICS OF SATAN (G. Melies, 1907), DEAD OF NIGHT (A. Cavalcanti, B. Dearden, R. Hamner, 1945), LA MAIN DU DIABLE (M. Tourneur, 1942), LAS VISITEURS DU SOIR (M. Carne), and LA BEAUTE DU DIABLE (R. Clair). JUST IMAGINE was also presented as "the first science fiction film" (sic) and was a great disappointment to the majority of the audience who were not expecting it to be a musical comedy.

Running in parallel with the Trieste Festival was The First European Convention of Science Fiction, which included panel discussion and lectures on films, comics and the literature from Tolkien to John Brunner.

Jean-Claude Morlot

## BIBLIO-FANTASTIQUE

by Baird Searls

The use of popular forms of entertainment as the material for more serious works of "art" is hardly new. Toulouse-Lautrec comes immediately to mind. Composers have always used folk or popular music as fodder, and the novel has used the theater as locale and metaphor not infrequently. But with the emergence of electronic reproduction, when one can be sure that an enormous amount of people have all been exposed to exactly the same things, the artist has been able to use the stuff of mass culture (primarily film and comics) the way a 19th century creator could use the stuff of nature and history. The horror film, as a notable genre of popular cinema since its beginning, has supplied much material of this sort and now we have a novel totally based on the field. It is Brock Brower's *The Late, Great Creature* (Atheneum). It is not just another book about the movie industry; the very warp and woof of its fabric is spun from the horror film and I would venture to say that if you had never seen one, this novel would be almost meaningless, and, contrariwise, the better you know the genre, the more you'll get out of Brower's work. And I don't mean on a fan fact level. He has set overtones of great humor and high tragedy; both are grounded in knowledgeability in that specific mythology. How much of Shakespeare would be meaningless if you didn't know Greco-Roman history and mythology?

I must say it's an infuriating book on which to do a debut review because so much of the pleasure I derived from it came from the constant stream of surprise incorporated in it; one is tempted to simply say, "Buy it. You'll like it." But that's expecting too much, of course, so I will gingerly try to give some idea of the book without spilling the beans.

The late, great creature of the title is an actor named Simon Moro, a legendary figure of the movies famed primarily for his mastery of roles in horror films. His career is known to have started in post-World War I Germany; he reigned in Hollywood in the 30s, but was reduced to working with Abbott and Costello in the next decade, followed by a B quickie in which he played the Gila Man with such success

## THE AWARDS

### The Jury

The Jury was composed of Luigi Chiarini (Italy), John Brunner (Great Britain), Gordon Hitchens (U.S.A.), Ado Kyrrou (Greece) and Kurt Steiner (France).

### The Gold Asteroid

Best Picture: Awarded to SILENT RUNNING (U.S.A.)

### The Silver Asteroid

Best Actor: Awarded to Mitia Nikolaiev for his performance in SHAG S KRYSHI (U.S.S.R.)  
Best Actress: Awarded to Dominique Erlanger for her performance in LE SEUIL DE VIDE (Fr.)

### Best Short Film

Awarded to HET LAASTE OORDEEL (Belgium)

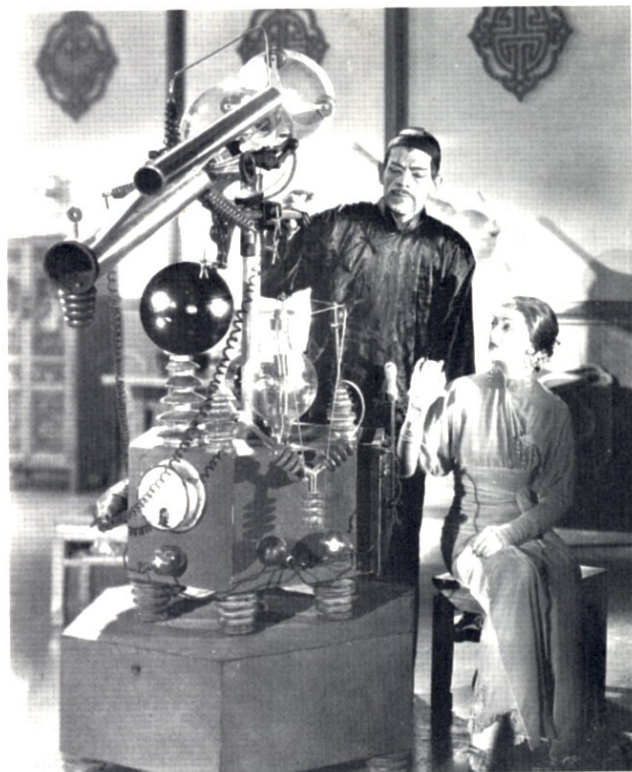
### Best Experimental Film

Awarded to ECCE HOMO (Italy-Yugoslavia)

### Special Prize

Awarded to BEWARE THE BLOB (U.S.A.)





that several more were made around the same character. He is now attempting a comeback in a vehicle based on a work by Edgar Allan Poe: "The Raven" to be exact.

The first section of the novel is narrated by a none-too-personable writer intent on doing an article on Moro for "Esquire." Aha, we think; it's going to be like CITIZEN KANE or THE GREAT MAN. Well, not quite. Our writer does the obligatory interviews, comes up with a lot of facts, some of which dovetail, some of which contradict. What were those scandalous beginnings in Berlin? What is Moro's relationship to his current leading lady, Hazel Rio? What became of that film he made in Germany all too soon after the end of World War II? Even in the interview with Moro himself, obviously playing the role of Simon Moro with great relish, something is missing, and it ain't as simple as "Rosebud."

This section is the funny one. Brower knows his horror films, and so does his surrogate; they are used as frame of reference throughout. Real people also are used close to the point of libel; in the case of one character, the name is changed but his position in the industry combined with a talent for merchandising art make the cover a thin one. It's a vicious portrait but very witty; not calculated to appeal to the Gay Liberation Front, but ringing true nonetheless. At one point even my usually unraisable eyebrow went up when the writer is about to be shown some snapshots by this particular character and wonders if they might be of said character going down on Roddy McDowall.

Part the second of The Late, Great Creature is from the viewpoint of the director of "The Raven," and concerns the post-production events when he and Moro are in New York to publicize the movie. We are abruptly away from the Kane journalistic ambience, and into an almost straight account of events, highly flavored by the director, who specializes in cheap filmmaking and exhibitionism (sexual, that is). Brower has nicely captured here the kind of idiot, manic quality that is common to the film world and even more so to the manufacture of publicity therein. Still,

the mysteries about Moro and his actions pile up, as we observe through the director's eyes the planning of an ultimate publicity stunt.

The third section, and last, of the book is told by Moro himself. Here all mysteries are resolved, calling forth in the reader the ideal reaction of surprise combined with "of course." Wild horses would not drag any of the revelations out of me, including the resolution of the publicity stunt, or of Moro himself (the title does give that much away). I will say that in Simon Moro, Brock Brower has created one of the most original, and appealing, characters in modern fiction.

I can't resist, also, praising several other aspects of the book. There are two wonderful set pieces. One is on the set of "The Raven" and is an excellent evocation of the hysteria of making a film on a tight schedule, not to mention little details like how all those cobwebs are made (with a machine incorporating a high powered fan, that is a factor in the best bit of black humor in the book--sorry, I can't resist telling this one--in which a severed finger ends up being displayed on a late night talk show). The other is the final publicity stunt mentioned above.

Readers who delight in symbols, small and large, will find much to play with here. I might call attention to Moro's initials, for instance, and that his German films were made under the name of Rudi Eckmann. I will eschew any of the larger interpretations potential in the novel, since that's a game I don't enjoy.

To temper what might seem a totally gushing rave, I might fault the form of the book to some degree. As indicated, there is a complete change, not only of viewpoint, but of style in each section, and to a degree, the narrators of the first two distract a bit by their personal idiosyncracies, the writer's problems with his wife and career being more tedious than the director's momentary exhibitionistic interludes, needless to say. In retrospect, Moro's story seems unduly fragmented because of this, but there is so much that is enjoyable here that I may be picking nits.

In any case, I can but say what I said earlier... "Buy it. You'll like it."

## THE SCORE

by Mark Stevens

Scoring a film is a tremendously difficult task. So many variables work against success. The technical aspects alone are just awesome and it is only after a complete mastery of these technical aspects is attained that a composer can truly begin to lend a palpable character to a film with his music. A fledgling composer may bring interesting tonal colors to his early efforts but it's usually a long maturation process that sees him to the point where his technical mastery allows him to go deeper than interesting sounds.

There are composers who are now working towards this point; there are composers who never made it there (maybe they found there was more money in just the interesting sounds); and, finally, there is that small, select group who are at that juncture of technical and aesthetic prowess.

Certain films suggest conventions in one's approach to scoring them--Westerns, War Stories, etc. The third group of composers either work these conventions better than anyone else or strike out with a fresh outlook. However, the real judge of their dramatic maturity is their way with the film that has no real convention or tradition for scoring.

Case in point--Robert Mulligan's film of Tom Tryon's THE OTHER. Here's a situation in which the music, I think, is crucial to the film's success. This is in no way meant to slight Mulligan's marvelous achievement with the Udvarnoky twins, yet, I can't imagine the film without that absolutely sublime score by Jerry Goldsmith. I have a problem with Goldsmith in that his consistent excellence and almost supernatural versatility have a way of completely destroying any critical objectivity on my part. He just seems to get better and better. There is no one else I can think of who could have done as well with the ambivalence of Tryon's tale. I have a feeling that another composer would have laid very heavy hands on the more gothic facets of the

story and ignored the poetically lyrical moments that Goldsmith imparts such delicate and subtle shadings to.

What could have been a cute gimmick is herein used with great effectiveness--the use of the main theme as a whistled motif for "the other." The device serves as a chilling valedictory in the closing scene. I wonder how many viewers noticed that the theme used for the scenes of the playing of "the game" is the Russian folk song sung by Uta Hagen in one scene. It's an exquisite piece of scoring and I'm really lost in my admiration for the man.

When the device of whistling is brought up the composer who usually comes to mind is Ennio Morricone, who, I suppose, has done the most for the whistled theme in the last five years. It comes as no surprise then to find him using it again in his music for the French thriller WITHOUT APPARENT MOTIVE. Equally surprising is that it still works rather well. The main theme is begun as a whistle and is then handed off to a solo trumpet. Most of the score shows Morricone beginning a subtle move away from his usual style, a move which probably goes back to THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE. This diversification is fortunate in that Morricone gives the impression that he's out to break Alfred Newman's record for soundtrack proliferation. And that kind of exposure can wear out a style pretty quick.

If I might prolong our discussion of whistled themes a bit longer, another prolific composer whose main theme for the film PRIME CUT is belted out through pursed lips is Lalo Schifrin. For Michael Ritchie's stylized gangster flick Schifrin does an interesting job in contrapuntal scoring, notably in the oddly tender scene between Weenie and Violet in the greenhouse. Another example of his playing against the visual is the "Muzak" main title under the shots of a Chicago enforcer being turned into a string of hot dogs. Music and film mix excitingly in the climactic shootout in a cornfield.

Earlier this year Schifrin produced an equally dynamic soundtrack for DIRTY HARRY. At times reminding one of his music for BULLITT, his





Above: Scenes from three horror classics currently in theatrical rerelease from MGM. Left: Bela Lugosi and Carol Borland in Tod Browning's **MARK OF THE VAMPIRE** (1935). Middle: Boris Karloff and Myrna Loy in **MASK OF FU MANCHU** (1932). Right: Fredric March and Rose Hobart in Rouben Mamoulian's **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE** (1932), the only offering unseen on TV.

stuff for the Siegel film makes excellent use of a Fender Rhodes electric piano as a solo instrument. The main title is a hard, driving thing that puts Hayes' theme from **SHAFT** well in the background.

It's interesting to compare Goldsmith's score for the original **PLANET OF THE APES** with that of Tom Scott for the new **CONQUEST OF THE PLANET OF THE APES**. Scott, who seems to be serving an apprenticeship under Goldsmith (if their collaboration on **THE CULPEPPER CATTLE COMPANY** and Scott's scoring of the new **Apes** film is any evidence), backs the action well but is, as yet, short on the nuances Goldsmith provided for **APES**.

It has been brought to my attention that I have been giving short shrift to the Hammer Film scorers. Well, that studio has the benefit of competent, if unexceptional, composers. James Bernard appears to have left the fold leaving Harry Robinson to fill the gap. His romantic theme for **TWINS OF EVIL** was quite pleasant but the dramatic underscoring matched that rather overwrought quality of the rest of the film. However, I'll always have a warm spot in my heart for the theme he wrote for the Hammer television effort, **JOURNEY TO THE UNKNOWN**. New talent does begin to make its mark at Hammer as evidenced by Christopher YOUNG's quietly ingratiating score for **HANDS OF THE RIPPER**. Until such a time as Hammer decides to lift its half a million budget limit in the production of its films, the studio will have to forgo the employment of such past ciphers as Benjamin Frankel (**CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF**), Edwin Astley (**THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**), and Tri-Stram Carey (**FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH**).

Mark Stevens

## FOREIGN FILM TWO FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA

by Jean-Claude Morlot

Some people may think that horror, fantasy and science fiction films are unknown behind the "iron curtain." But Russia produces many of these films. **SOLARIS** for instance, which was entered by them in the Cannes Film Festival. There are also a smaller number of genre films produced in Russian satellite countries, some of which gain notoriety through festival screenings. This year, two films from Czechoslovakia have received a very limited release in Paris: **VALERIE AU PAYS DES MERVEILLES** (Valerie In Wonderland), and **L'INCINERATEUR DE CADAVRES** (The Corpse Burner).

**VALERIE AU PAYS DES MERVEILLES** is a charming fantasy by director Jaromil Jires, with poetically beautiful color photography by Jan Cukr. Actress Jaroslava Schallerova plays Valerie, a young girl who possesses 2 ear rings with magical properties. Anyone wearing them is immortal she believes. Reinforcing this belief are the continuing parade of spirits, devils, vampires, witches and creatures from a darker world she encounters in every day life who try to rob them from her. Valerie becomes involved in numerous adventures in protecting her valued rings, ending in an encounter with a vernal priest who condemns her to be burnt at the stake as a witch when she refuses to submit to his lustful desires.

Director Jaromil Jires has structured his film to be fascinatingly ambiguous. It can be interpreted as a simple fantasy, with an ironic title, as the wonders that Valerie encounters are not as wonderful as they seem to be. Or it can be accepted as the psychological point of view of the fantasies of a young girl passing through a very difficult age toward becoming a young woman, that stage between adolescence and adulthood.

The theme of the film is lovingly conceived in the screenplay by director Jires and collaborator Ester Krumbachova and beautifully executed in the eccentric performances, Jires' subtle direction and the impressive sets by Jan Oliva. The film is almost Fellini-like in its debauch of color, the strange characters that make sudden appearances never to be seen again, and its

Scenes from two Czechoslovakian films currently in release through Cinemas Associates in France. Left: Rudolf Hrusinsky as the demented Mr. Kopfrkingl in **L'INCINERATEUR DE CADAVRES**. Right: A strange character from **VALERIE AU PAYS DES MERVEILLES** (Valerie In Wonderland).



Photos taken during La Premiere Convention Francaise du Cinema Fantastique held at the Cultural Center in Nanterre, France during May 16th through the 20th. Convention organizer Alain Schlockoff greeted director Peter Sasdy and Peter Cushing (below right) who then fielded questions from the audience (below left). The convention screened 15 films including Sasdy's Hammer Film **COUNTESS DRACULA**. (Photos: A. Venisse)

visions of monsters and vampire orgies. But despite these beautiful trappings the film ultimately fails because it does not succeed in drawing the viewer into its unique fantasy world. All of Jires' beautiful images are viewed without the requisite passion and involvement needed to make them moving or meaningful. We have here a luxurious picture book without the captions to give us understanding. It is a pitiful failure for such a beautiful film that captures some of the magic of **THE WIZARD OF OZ**.

The other Czechoslovakian release, **L'INCINERATEUR DE CADAVRES**, directed by Juraj Hertz, is something completely different from **VALERIE AU PAYS DES MERVEILLES**. It is a stark, black comedy, on a subject one cannot imagine being able to laugh at. The film is set in Nazi Germany during the years 1938-1940, and is the story of a man, Mr. Kopfrkingl, employed in a crematorium. He regards himself as a

man with a mission: to put people at rest and calm their pain and unhappiness, and together with a high-ranking friend in the Nazi party he is able to realize his ambitions beyond his wildest dreams. Together they instigate a plan to cremate any individual not of pure Aryan descent. Mr. Kopfrkingl's obsession overwhelms him to the degree that he murders his two children and his wife when he learns of her distant Jewish ancestry. In the end he realizes his great master plan: crematoriums all over the country to burn millions of people for a better facism.

Director Juraj Hertz has made his film with tongue in cheek and a sense of humor that is indeed black, and to some, it may be offensive. The black and white photography is grim and austere and the various murders are treated with a seriousness in the best horror film tradition. The performance of Rudolf Hrusinsky as Mr. Kopfrkingl is also worthy of note.





# COMING

Sir James Carreras, head of Hammer Films for many years, has sold out to his son Michael. Michael was given two weeks to find the necessary funds to keep the ownership of Hammer Films within the Carreras family. The company had been sought after for purchase by the Laurie Marsh group. The changeover in ownership at Hammer is perhaps responsible for the disappearance of most of their films from general release. **DEMONS OF THE MIND** (formerly titled **BLOOD WILL HAVE BLOOD**) and **DRACULA A.D. '72** (see 2:1:46 and 2:2:5) have not yet gone into release. I attended a private screening of **DEMONS OF THE MIND** and although it is slow moving at times it represents an interesting "new type" of Hammer thriller, but I was asked not to review it until there was an official press screening—that was over six months ago! **STRAIGHT ON TILL MORNING** and **FEAR IN THE NIGHT**, the latter with Peter Cushing, also seem to be having trouble. They went out on a selected cinema engagement for a fortnight as a double bill and have since disappeared from release.

Chris Knight

Following is a rundown of the horror, fantasy and science fiction films now filming, or in preparation, as well as notes on those in release. Titles listed in previous issues are indicated by (0:00) at the end of the article, giving a reference where additional information can be found. The first digit is the volume number, the second digit is the issue number, and the remaining digits are the page number on which the earlier listing can be found.

Below: Peter Cushing as Dr. Pope, a scholarly man of science and a realist who uncovers a supernatural curse in **BRIDE OF FENGRIFFEN**, an Amicus Film Production directed by Roy Ward Baker.



**THE ARDREY PAPERS** will be another fascinating documentary from Walon Green, who produced last year's Oscar winning **THE HELLSTROM CHRONICLE**. Based on three books by Robert Ardrey, the film will delve into man's evolution and Ardrey's increasingly accepted theories concerning man's territorial imperative and his intimate link with the animal world...

**BLACKENSTEIN** will be the 100th suspense-terror production for AIP and a continuation of their black horror series begun with the incredibly ludicrous (but wildly profitable) **BLACULA**. **BLACKENSTEIN**, not as phonetically neat as **BLACULA**, will be subtitled "The Black Frankenstein," for those of you who didn't have it figured...

**BRIDE OF FENGRIFFEN** is the twelfth in a series of horror films produced by Milton Subotsky and Max J. Rosenberg at Shepperton Studios under their Amicus Films production banner. The film was originally announced under the title **I HAVE NO MOUTH AND I MUST SCREAM** which brought speculation that it was an adaptation of the highly renowned anthology edited by Harlan Ellison. It is not. The original screenplay by Roger Marshall is a gothic ghost story set in the 18th century and stars Peter Cushing, Ian Ogilvy, Stephanie Beacham, Guy Rolfe, Herbert Lom and Patrick Magee, and is directed by Roy Ward Baker who recently did **ASYLUM** for Amicus...

**CHOSEN SURVIVORS** will be the Metromedia Producers Corp. followup to this year's **TALES FROM THE CRYPT**. The film is being produced by Leon Benson from an original screenplay by H. B. Cross which tells the story of a group of survivors of a nuclear holocaust who take refuge in underground caves and are threatened by swarms of vampire bats. The film began location lensing in Mexico in October (2:2:46)...

**THE CLONING OF DR. APPLEBY** is a Filmmakers International Production produced by Paul Hunt and Michael Bennett. The screenplay by Steve Fisher concerns the duplication of an individual, grown from a single cell. Otis Young and Michael Greene star in the film, formerly titled **DEAD MAN RUNNING**, to be codirected by Paul Hunt and executive producer Lamar Card...

**CONQUEST OF THE DEEPS** began lensing in September on location in Toronto, Canada for 20th Century Fox release. The Sanford Howard production is being directed by Daniel Petrie from an original story and screenplay by Jack De Witt, dealing with the rescue of the members of a faltering undersea laboratory. Filming is also scheduled for Halifax, Malta and the Bahamas for targeted release of May, 1973...

**THE DAY THE BODIES MELTED** is scheduled for filming by the King Brothers from an original horror screenplay by Joanne Court. The story deals with the science of cryonics, the process of freezing people at death for revival at some future date when medical knowledge had advanced sufficiently to do so...

**DR. DEATH** has completed filming in Los Angeles for D. B. Productions. Produced and directed by Eddie Saeeta from an original screenplay by Sal Ponti concerning a 1,000 year-old man who remains alive by capturing the souls of the newly dead. The film stars John Considine, Leon Askin and Florence Marly...

**THE EXORCIST** will feature film director J. Lee Thompson (**EYE OF**

At Right: Christopher Lee adds another classic role to his long list of performances in essaying the dual role of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in yet another version of the oft-filmed Robert Louis Stevenson novel, **I, MONSTER**, from Amicus Film Productions. Peter Cushing co-stars as Lee's solicitor Utterson, and the film, directed by Stephen Weeks, also features Mike Raven as Enfield. Currently in release in England through British Lion Films, the American distribution rights are held by Columbia Pictures.

**THE DEVIL** in the pivotal role of a film director who comes to a bad end under supernatural circumstances which trigger police, medical and religious investigations of a Georgetown house. William Peter Blatty is producing his own novel for the screen (a la Thomas Tryon) and William Friedkin directs for Warner Bros release. The film stars Lee J. Cobb, Ellen Burstyn, Max Von Sydow, and 12-year-old Linda Blair as Regan, the young girl possessed by the Devil. Location filming will be done in New York and Washington, D.C. (1:2:42)...

**GULLIVER'S TRAVELS** is slated for production by Josef Shafelt who is at present putting the finishing touches on **ALICE IN WONDERLAND** for release in December by American National Enterprises and 20th Century Fox. The remake of Jonathan Swift's classic is envisioned more as a political film pointing to the senseless turmoil in Northern Ireland than as a children's film, as produced twice before, by Max Fleischer as a cartoon feature, and by Charles H. Schneer as the Ray Harryhausen film **THREE WORLDS OF GULLIVER**. Richard Harris will star as Gulliver for release through A. N. E. ...

**HELL HOUSE** will be the debut production of James H. Nicholson's Academy Pictures Corp., based on the novel by Richard Matheson. Nicholson, co-founder of American International Pictures with Samuel Z. Arkoff, recently resigned as president of that company (a position now assumed by Arkoff who is also chairman of the board) to form his own independent production company. The Matheson novel is the story of a man with only weeks to live who offers a large reward to anyone proving the existence of life after death, while taking up residence in a well-known haunted house to investigate on his own. Nicholson's Academy Pictures Corp has pacted for distribution of its films through 20th Century Fox...

**ISLAND AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD** will be the most expensive film project in the history of Walt Disney Productions. John Wedon's screenplay, based on the novel **The Lost Ones** by Ian Cameron, concerns an Englishman's search for his son by dirigible in the frozen arctic and the discovery of a lost civilization of Norse explorers on a volcanically warmed tropical-like island. The production has been set at a cost of approximately \$8 million (2:1:45)...

**LIFE AFTER DEATH** is the title to a film to be produced by Bill Naud and Marcus Bach, to be based on research on the subject conducted by scholars and theologians over the last 300 years. Bach is the holder of six degrees and head of the Institute for living religions...

**LIVE AND LET DIE** will be the next installment in the James Bond series with **SAINT** star Roger Moore taking over the coveted starring role from Sean Connery, who has sworn off again, at least until a better offer comes along. The eighth in the Bond series is again produced by Albert







R. Broccoli and Harry Saltzman for United Artists release...

**LOST HORIZON** has begun filming for Columbia release. The Ross Hunter blockbuster is a remake of the 1937 Ronald Coleman classic and is based on the novel by James Hilton. Peter Finch will essay the Coleman role, with Liv Ullmann, Sally Kellerman, George Kennedy, Michael York, Olivia Hussey, Bobby Van and James Shigeta giving support. Charles Boyer has been cast as the High Lama and Sir John Gielgud as Chang. The musical drama, with lyrics by Hal David and music by Burt Bacharach will be directed by Charles Jarrott for 1973 release (1:44)...

**MANSION OF EVIL** began production in August for Mayberry-Montez Productions. The original screenplay by Joel Levinson involves the rebirth of Satan in a newborn baby and the tragedy visited upon the baby's family centering on the character of the brother, a policeman played by John Armond. Leonard Barr, Louise Lawson and Mark Hannibal also head the cast...

**NIGHT WORLD** is Robert Bloch's forthcoming novel from Simon and Schuster and has been purchased for filming by MGM. Bloch has also been signed to adapt his novel for the screen...

**PHASE IV** began filming abroad in October for Paramount Pictures release. The original screenplay by Mayo Simon concerns the confrontation between mankind and extraterrestrial life at the furthest outposts of man's exploration of outer space. Saul Bass, renowned animator and film designer, will direct for producer Paul Radin...

**PYRAMID** is the current project of producer Michael Gruskoff and director Douglas Trumbull who teamed to produce this year's most interesting science fiction film **SILENT RUNNING**. The script by David Z. Goodman is termed "a science fiction thriller" for release by MGM...

**SINBAD'S GOLDEN VOYAGE** is completing location filming in Majorca, for release through Columbia Pictures. The Charles H. Schneer production, in association with Ray Harryhausen is said to be an "Arabian Nights" fantasy and not a direct sequel to their earlier film. Gordon Hessler is directing, with John Phillip Law, Caroline Munro, Tom Baker and Martin Shaw heading the cast (2:14)...

**SO EVIL, MY SISTER** will be a production of Zenth International starring Sidney Chaplin and Susan Strasberg. The psychological suspense melodrama is from a script by Tony Crechales and is being directed by old veteran Reginald LeBorg, who dates back to Universal's **THE MUMMY'S GHOST**...

**SOYLENT GREEN** will be a co-production of Russell Thacher and Walter Seltzer based on a novel by science fiction author Harry Harrison. The screenplay by Stanley R. Greenberg is a futuristic epic concerning the consequences of a worldwide ecological disaster. Charlton Heston has been set to star with Richard Fleischer directing. Producer Seltzer and Heston previously teamed to make **THE OMEGA MAN** for Warner Bros last year and Richard Fleischer is the director of Disney's **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** and **FANTASTIC VOYAGE**. Release set for next year will be by MGM...

**THE SPECTRE OF EDGAR ALLAN POE** is the seventh screen version of the life of the famous American poet.



Above: Scenes of Vincent Price from **THEATRE OF BLOOD**, directed by Douglas Hickox and also starring Diana Rigg, Ian Hendry, Robert Coote, Jack Hawkins, Michael Hordern, Robert Morley, Dennis Price and Diana Dors. Top: Price as Shylock from Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." Right: Price as Brutus from "Julius Caesar." Left: Price as the mad actor Edward Lionheart.

The First Leisure Corporation production stars Robert Walker Jr. in the role of Poe. Costarring are Cesar Romero, Carol Ohmart and Edmund O'Brien. Joseph Cotten gave the most recent Poe portrayal in the 1951 film **THE MAN IN THE CLOAK**. H. B. Warner played Poe in the 1915 film **THE RAVEN**. The new version will deal extensively with Poe's love affair with the mysterious "Lenore," referred to in many of his works, whose identity has remained a mystery. Bruce Keller directs from a script by Denton Fox...

**TERMINAL ORDER** is a futuristic action picture set on a prison island somewhere off the coast of the United States. The Philip D'Antoni Production from a screenplay by neophyte Howard Miller is set for production and release by 20th Century Fox...

**THEATRE OF BLOOD** is a take-off on the recent and successful series of Dr. Phibes films from AIP, also starring Vincent Price. Price plays a demented actor Edward Lionheart who systematically murders theatre critics who gave him bad reviews and who awarded the Best Actor award to someone else. Diana Rigg plays his daughter who aids him in dispatching the critics according to death scenes from Shakespearean plays. The film also features Ian Hendry, Robert Coote, Jack Hawkins, Michael Hordern, Robert Morley, Dennis Price

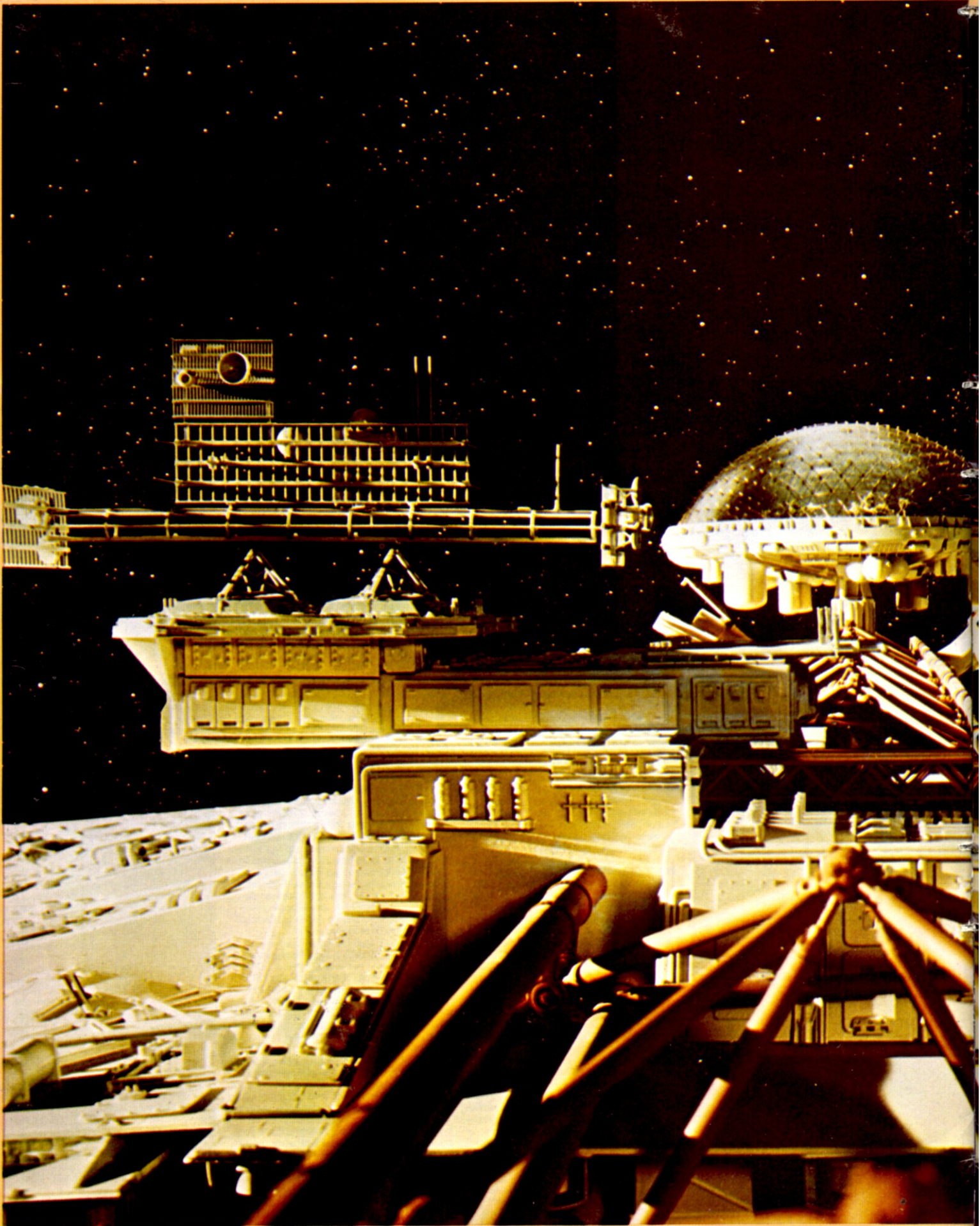
and Diana Dors. Director Douglas Hickox filmed the story entirely on location at the abandoned London theatre, the Putney Hippodrome, which was rented for the fantastic sum of only \$127 a week by the film company who set parts of it afire for the film's climactic scenes...

**THE THOUSAND YEAR MAN** is on the production slate of James H. Nicholson's Academy Pictures Corp. To be developed from an idea by Nicholson concerning a future man whose vital organs and body parts are continually replaced through transplantation, the film will be released thru 20th Century Fox...

**VOODOOQUEEN** is an original screenplay by producers Fred and Beverly Sebastian to be filmed on location in New Orleans. The film is the story of a young black girl who believes she is the reincarnation of Marie Le Veau, the 19th Century voodoo queen of old New Orleans...

**WOMEN OF TRANSPLANT ISLAND** is a Philippines production of Ross Hagen and Ronald Remy starring Nancy Kwan as a doctor who develops a serum which prevents rejection in transplant surgery. Kwan leads a group of women who capture leading male athletes and offer their organs for sale. The original story is by Lou Whitehall and producer Hagen who costars in the film...









# Silent Running

ANALYZED BY DAVID BARTHOLOMEW

Divorced from its thematic material and darkly fanciful *Weltanschauung*, the plot of Douglas Trumbull's first film is remarkably scant. During the middle of the 21st Century, Earth continues to spin through space, but the planet has been completely defoliated to allow for the requirements of an enormous population and the extremes of a humanitarian-diminished technological "progress," the first growths of which we are now, in the 1970s, apprehensively facing. Several huge vehicles, American Airlines Space Freighters, now roam through space supporting gigantic dome structures which contain flourishing examples of every kind of plant and animal life previously known on earth before all except human life was purged.

The Valley Forge ship, piloted by four men: Wolf, Barker, Keenan, and Freeman Lowell (Bruce Dern), is part of the Berkshire Fleet. When Congress votes to end their idealistic (future reforestation) funding of the project, an order is sent to eject the domes and destroy them, and all the men are overjoyed (for it means going home) except for Lowell, who has adopted the preservation of the lush green life in the domes as his mission as easily and as finally as he has taped the Conservationists' Pledge above his bunk. When the men scoff at his horror at leaving and begin setting the nuclear devices to blow up the domes, Lowell embarks on the only plan available to him. He kills his crewmates: one is strangled and the other two he traps aboard one of the domes just before it is fired into space and exploded. He fakes an accident to fool Anderson, the Director of Berkshire who is anxious to get his men back to Earth, and shoots off alone with his precious forest, hoping that he and the vehicle will not be considered valuable enough to warrant a costly search. Once "free," Lowell reprograms the small mechanical drones (and names them Huey and Dewey) to assume a larger role in both the ship and his own life. Problems occur along the aimless journey including a brush into the rings of Saturn which nearly wrecks the ship. Lowell carelessly runs down one of the drones, Huey, and is only able to partially restore his functions by surgery. Later, the forest in the dome begins to die and turn brown, and Lowell, after days of research fail, cannot find a remedy. His frustration is heightened by Anderson's voice suddenly booming from the long silent radio. A party has searched for Lowell and now will land on the Valley Forge to take him home and destroy the last remaining dome. At the same moment, Lowell suddenly realizes that the forest is dying from lack of sunlight as he has been heading into deep space to avoid tracking by search ships. He quickly sets up spotlights to revive the greenery, seals Dewey into the dome, and dispatches it to hurtle through space to be maintained by the immortal drone. Back on the freighter with Huey, plagued by guilt over his destruction of the crewmen and wracked by loneliness and boredom, Lowell detonates a nuclear explosive which obliterates the freighter, Huey, and himself.

The very large themes that Douglas Trumbull and screenwriters Deric Washburn, Mike Cimino and Steve Bocho have tackled in *SILENT RUNNING* may be gleaned from any cursory examination of the past six months' issues of "Time" or any other capsulating newsweekly. The issues explored in this film (superficially we can reduce them to Man Vs. Nature Vs. Machine) surround us more unavoidably than those of almost any other science fiction film that has been made. And as befits a novice director, Trumbull has used them, as the heart of the film, very unevenly.

The first full third of *SILENT RUNNING* is unbelievably awkward. For reasons of narrative economy, the entire premise upon which the film is based—the extremely complex and pejorative situation of the quality of life, both on Earth (which we never see) and on the Valley Forge—is too facetiously delivered to us through bland conversations of the three crewmen countered by full-

blown reports by Lowell. Too frequently Trumbull thrusts his camera right into Bruce Dern's face for his rushing monologues (on the horrors of pollution and synthetic foods, the desperate need for conservation, the brilliance of green trees and animal life, the threat to man posed by mechanization) mouthed by Dern with an uncontrolled eye-rolling zeal that borders on the fanatically irrational. That such an unshaded performance exists, mainly due to a script as flat-footedly simplistic as the hero is conspicuously named, necessarily links the noble themes of the film to a decidedly paranoid man (we wonder how such a man could let all the domes save one be destroyed before being moved to violence) and proves the major weakness, and a very damaging one, of the film. First directors are notoriously weak with actors; even limiting himself in *SILENT RUNNING* largely to one does not help Trumbull a bit.

But Trumbull's real talents lie in other areas, and they are brilliantly displayed to the utmost elsewhere in his film. The model work and special effects in *SILENT RUNNING* are absolutely breathtaking and, more importantly and most difficult to achieve, flawlessly incorporated into the body of the film, a feat Kubrick sporadically failed to accomplish with the same quality of effects in 2001. The intricately constructed vehicles are established as not only the environment of the film's characters but also as the last remaining islands of terrestrial nature so precariously floating through empty black space. The effect is extraordinarily felt, frightening in its implications; Trumbull's awesome success here (only marred by one disjointed zoom-away early in the film) by itself almost atones for the defects of the first third of the film and its lurid verbalizations.

But as the film progresses Trumbull turns further and further from words into a well conceived nonverbal realm that is totally his more successful domain. The central and most carefully worked out motif of the film is the innate conflict, if not competition, of man and machine, and the entwined and twisted roles of creator and created. The vehicles and the drones are, of course, the basic structures of the film. Trumbull's interior views are full of levers and switches and buttons and dials with swinging needles, banks of computers, walls of flashing lights and gleaming metal surfaces hiding what enormous power can only be incomprehensible to us (and to Lowell, perhaps, as well). This environment is the fantastic product of a fantastic technology that must assume responsibility for Earth's de-natured plight, and now, via the Berkshire Project, quite ironically the last protector of all it has expunged from the Earth for the sake of a cold mechanical Progress. Trumbull uses the drones (played, let us not forget, by amputees) for his most powerful statements: the last logical thrust for mankind will be to humanize the mechanical.

Lowell works at cross-purposes: he reprograms the drones first to medically repair the damage to his leg suffered in the struggle to kill his mates. Recognizing that he needs more than expert mechanics if his voyage is to succeed, Lowell attempts to render them men. And it is astonishing how Trumbull has filmically succeeded in doing so. In a brief scene outside the surface of the craft, after the third drone (who was to have been Louie) has been eliminated in the turbulent flight through the rings of Saturn, the two remaining drones momentarily face each other and are allowed a fleeting premonition that perhaps Trumbull will upend his film and force them to follow the route of H.A.L. Our apprehension dissolves, and we can only marvel at how movingly Trumbull has humanized them. Of course, sympathetic raw material is present: the drones avoid the usual metallic foreignness of conventional science fiction robots (like Robby) by their peculiar waddling walk. Later scenes including a





Botanist Freeman Lowell (Bruce Dern) works frantically to repair Huey, the drone which he accidentally ran down with his car, from *SILENT RUNNING*. Trumbull's film seems to be attracting a counter-culture, ecology-hip audience in sufficient numbers to make it an economic success.

tree planting, a drolly humorous poker game paralleling the earlier human one), the discovery of the illfated third drone's foot where it had become lodged on an outside catwalk, and the surgery on Huey (paralleling the drone's surgery on Lowell) are all episodes designed to make the drones assume differentiated personalities as Lowell's new mates and a collective presence more meaningful to Lowell and to us than that of his former three human crewmen, Wolf, Barker and Keenan.

But in *SILENT RUNNING*, idealism cannot last, and the film is laced with a quiet pessimism that very well may escape unnoticed. Lowell ultimately realizes the wisdom of Father John Donne's poetic warning (quite literally an island here) and recognizes that man can never live basing his life on an impossible interaction with machinery no matter how humanoid its form. Reversing the process, Lowell attempts to shed, in a machine-like manner, his emotions in order to survive, but the effort in itself results in the near loss of the forest, the only reason for his flight in the Valley Forge in the beginning. The frustrations, guilt, and loneliness build up in Lowell to the breaking point, which is stylistically, the crackling of Anderson's voice on the radio. He realizes at that moment that the technology surrounding him is hostile; the purity of solitude and space is now a nightmare. Lowell has tried and failed to create what would have been the very antithesis of technology. He again becomes a man and the solution to the forest's dying immediately flashes upon him, a solution so simple and commonsensical as to be obscured by the scientific tests and elaborate calculations he attempted to utilize in finding it. In killing himself, Lowell means to atone for his previous elimination of the three men, but when he takes Huey along with him to oblivion, we are left with a nagging doubt that because of Huey's even forced role as a person which exhibits a certain measure of moral innocence (Trumbull's touching camerawork with the drones), he is merely compounding his sins in taking, far from the only path facing him, the easiest way out.

And the device he leaves behind, the sealed dome with Dewey supposedly to eternally "tend his garden," is hardly optimistic, despite what implications are sentimentally projected by the film's final shots and the end-title song. We must admit, nudged by the calm skepticism that is the natural product of the current age, that there is nothing at all permanent about the arrangement: Lowell saved nothing, only delayed its destruction. The pathetic array of lights cannot replace the relative permanence and intensity of the sun;

the haphazard journey through space on the unplanable dome can hardly escape collision with or bombardment by other bodies. The dome is, as Lowell mentions, his corked bottle with a note inside thrown to sea, but this vessel has all the fragility of the stunt bottles that hundreds of nondescript cowboys bashed each other with in hundreds of 1950s westerns. The final effect of *SILENT RUNNING* is one of a special dark kind of sadness, not the uplifting tragedy of a man who has succeeded though it cost him his life, but the more useless, wasted sadness of noble endeavors gone awry, the unassailable sadness of the vicious conquest by an unapproachable and uncompromising Fate despite what human deeds may dimly stand against it.

In the same vein is Trumbull's conjecture, through the use of the automobile which threads its subtle way through the film, that man takes his own destructive urges with him even into space and that he is inseparable from the mess he has created on Earth. We are first made aware of the other men's contempt and annoyance at Lowell's lofty affection for the life in the domes early in the film as they race the dune buggy-like vehicles around and finally through Lowell's plants and flowers (ironically, through the same flower bed in which Lowell later strangles Wolf). At another point in the film we glimpse Lowell venting his remorse by wildly driving around one of the large storage areas of Valley Forge; he only regains his self control by careening off one of the white geometric containers and smashing it and its cargo of what appears to be soil to the metallic floor. And it is an auto driven by Lowell that slams into Huey and precipitates a series of crises from which Lowell does not recover. I cannot recall a film since Welles' *MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS* that so slyly utilizes the automobile as a symbol of decay and of a benignly evil progress.

Trumbull seems to have put his apprenticeship with Kubrick to generally excellent use. His inexperience with the totality of the medium, however, results in a film that is rather roughshod, including a nasty rhythmic break in its middle. Also cluttering the narrative are two other disastrously pronounced breaks. In each case, a different verse of a perfectly insipid song (with lyrics, by Diane Lambert, like "Gather your children by your side in the sun and tell them it's not too late") warbled by Joan Baez propping up a sagging montage of images whose effect, far from forcing the audience to ponder the meaning of what it is seeing (which is probably intended here) is sheer boredom. (Joan Baez deserves a parenthesis here. I suppose, apart from the money,

she chooses her films for the honorable appeal to her hazy activist posture. I wish she would choose her lyrics as critically for she is becoming a reactionary force in films and a cliché as well. She has ruined two other recent films—*SACCO AND VENZETTI* and *JOE HILL*—with her incessant voice.) The lyrical technique of music over image, seldom done well, is disruptive to Trumbull's already loose craftsmanship.

Trumbull also encounters problems of distancing his character, particularly troublesome (as discussed above) since the script foolishly provides Dern with monologues and blocks of dialogue that resemble Sierra Club tracts run amok. Too many jutting closeups are used; what is needed are more stylistic devices such as occur later in the film when the conclusion of yet another pious speech is seen from the point of view of the drone to which Lowell is speaking to, in the form of a grainy TV image.

Yet the film provides many memorable moments apart from the excellent technical effects (including the ride through Saturn's rings that recalls the Trip in 2001) that so often make a young director so exciting to watch. The initial sequence, including the under-the-credits extreme closeups of insects and animals among the exaggerated beauty of plants and flowers, in which Dern is swimming nude in a crystalline forest pool and later donning a long primeval robe amidst the cavorting animals results in a delightful portrait of pristine innocence, of unspoiled Eden. It is broken by the camera pulling back just enough that we are shocked to discover the metal spines of the top of the dome and the blackness beyond. It is a fine, mind-blinding moment. New directors also use ideas that more established artists might discard as too dangerous. In one scene Trumbull, with a magnificent outrageousness, uses a squashed cantelope as a symbol of not only the doomed struggling Earth but also of the forthcoming plight of the Valley Forge as well.

It was only on the basis of his work with Kubrick that Trumbull was allowed to make *SILENT RUNNING*. Universal seems to have been reluctant to release the film, the work of a first-time director and a non-major production as well, in the teeth of the downwardly spiraling economic state of films in the United States. An added factor to this lack of faith is the staggering cost of opening a movie in New York, where its death or life at the pens of the critics largely determines the box office reaction of the rest of the country. Predictably, the New York critics bombed *SILENT RUNNING* (1 favorable review out of 4, although nationally it fared better with 8 favorable reviews out of 17) by their usual greeting of genre films in which all mental capacities and critical skills are abandoned, and the film under view is treated as a forum for dull one-line witticisms and even duller puns (particularly, for Trumbull's film, insensitivity exemplified by the "N. Y. Times" Vincent Canby, an ordinarily coherent reviewer). But as of this writing, several days after *SILENT RUNNING*'s March 31st opening here, the film has done well in three uptown theatres, and it seems, perhaps for the wrong reasons, to be attracting what is usually delineated as a counter-culture, ecology-hip audience which may yet slap down the negative press and pull in the needed box office returns.

Because the economic fate of this film is important; one feels the survival of quality genre films with modest budgets is at stake. Major studios have not produced or financed serious science fiction films in recent years without the compensation of either established star quality and hard-ticket sales (*MAROONED*) or bloated budgets and a basis on a best-selling novel (*THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN*), all values that insure box office returns and an ultimate profit.

*SILENT RUNNING*, despite its flaws, deserves to succeed. In addition to Trumbull's talents, it is beautifully scored by Peter Schickele (of P. D. Q. Bach fame) and excellently photographed by Charles F. Wheeler in rich resilient color with sombre tones of green and blue predominating. Like much good and lasting music, the film benefits from a certain passage of time which by reflection eases the blatancy of its script and the kind of directorial misjudgements born of inexperience and finally allows the strong emergence of its very majestic and skillfully visualized themes.



# LETTERS

Congratulations on another fine issue (Spring 1972). Special thanks to Mark Wolf for another much-welcomed installment on stop-motion. Being an avid animation enthusiast most of my life, Mark's intriguing compilation remains as a refreshing and informative entry that could only be thoroughly appreciated by those who, like myself, can really relate to it. One only has to consult Ray Fielding's bible on special effects cinematography for information on traveling matte systems, aerial image composites and the like, but Mark's brilliant integration of his own perspective on model animation techniques with rarely seen photos (especially material like Harryhausen's unfiled storyboards), and personal information on Danforth, et al, make it all worthwhile. The only aspect of it all that remains ambiguous in this reader's mind is the questionable use of the aerial brace as the explanation for defiance of gravity. True, the photo of Buddy Hackett astride the dragon from WONDERFUL WORLD OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM proves its existence and use in certain instances, but possible glass suspensions, object over aerial images composites, and blue-backed suspensions come to mind as feasible speculations. I would like to see Mr. Wolf's critique on how Ray animated his flying saucers and the mechanics involved in bringing his harpies and pteranodons to life.

Photo coverage on Jim Danforth was very interesting. I think that the plesiosaur sequence is his most spectacular tour de force to date. The beach scene composite with cavemen pulling on the "jig" and their crucial alignment with the animated footage is simply mind-boggling. I'm sure that scrutinizing viewers of this particular shot realized that "something new" was being perpetrated on the screen, and to scan the scene and analyze the elements is virtually impossible the first time around. Most of all, I think the atmospheric quality of the scene dominated it, a moody, low-key atmosphere that somehow brought to mind characteristics of the early German expressionistic cinema. Danforth's clever tank shots with their painted backdrops were also eerily effective, something I've never seen the likes of on the screen before, either. Unfortunately, the film was directorially inferior and too contrived in structure. It seems a pity that the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences took the matte work of BEDKNOBS AND BROOMSTICKS ov-

er the painstaking labor of one genius, but I suppose the previous comment had a lot to do with it. It also seems strange that Ray Harryhausen was never even nominated. It seems as though the members of the Academy are destined to become the self-appointed pallbearers of stop-motion cinema, just when it needed their support.

PAUL R. MANDELL  
462 E 52nd St, Brooklyn, NY 11203

My one gripe about your magazine is "The Score" by Mark Stevens. Although his comments are sometimes colorful, more often they are dull. Also, he rarely reviews anything but borderline fantasy and horror scores. Most likely they are scores such as SUMMER OF '42 and RED SKY AT MORNING, alright but rather conventional, and hardly cinefantastique.

One of the most neglected fantasy and science fiction composers around is Les Baxter. Baxter, who has written some of the most memorable fantasy scores in existence (BLACK SUNDAY, THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM, and BLACK SABBATH), has long used human voices, electronic effects, and bizarre orchestrations to enhance his scores quite some time before composers like Jerry Goldsmith, Ennio Morricone, and Andre Previn jumped on the bandwagon. Of course, Baxter has done other than fantasy films, his score to the much underrated A BOY TEN FEET TALL made brilliant use of female voices to capture the sad, somewhat fairy tale atmosphere of the film, and his score to William Whitney's MASTER OF THE WORLD is wonderful and majestic, probably the finest score in a Jules Verne based film. Baxter has done many more worthy films of note including HOUSE OF USHER, ALAKAZAM, THE GREAT AND THE DUNWICH HORROR.

TOM SCOFIELD  
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Can't agree with Robert Jerome on WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HELEN. I found it to be, if nothing more, a labor of love in the recreation of a Hollywood (and Southern California) that once flourished. Mr. Jerome must have taken a wrong turn somewhere along the way for I caught not a sight of a seedy SUNSET BOULEVARD. And believe me, I know that route like the back of my hand.

JIM YORK  
1435 S Monterey St, Alhambra, CA

You could do people a service if, when reviewing movies like HORROR OF THE BLOOD MONSTERS (Spring '72), you would identify "an old cave-man feature from abroad" and "some forgotten Russian lunar epic." If Mr.

Jerome knows the origin, could he let us in on it?

Does anyone have any information on the process whereby Carlos Hugo Christiansen's LA DAMA DE LA MUERTE (Chile, 1945) became the two-part CURSE OF THE STONE HAND (frequently seen on Chicago's WFLD Channel 32), with John Carradine? Can they identify the second film involved? Christiansen's film concerned the gambler.

In JONATHAN, Jonathan is the hero. I don't recall seeing any other vampire movie where the vampires hire a human army to protect them from the Christians.

CAROL SLINGO  
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Here are some foreign titles that may not have been released in the United States as yet:

NELLA STRETTA MORSA DEL RAGNO (In the Grip of the Spider), Germany-Italy, 1971, a story of Poe, directed by Anthony Dawson, with Anthony Franciosa, Michele Mercier and Peter Carsten.

HANNO CAMBIATO FACCIA (They Have Changed Face), Italy, 1971, directed by Corrado Farina, with Adolfo Celi and Geraldine Hooper.

DIE WEIBCHEN (The Females), Italy -Germany, 1970, directed by Zbynek Brynch, with Uschi Glas, Irina Demick and Pascale Petit.

MANNER SIND ZUM LIEBEN DA (The Girls from Atlantis), Germany, 1970, directed by Eckardt Schmidt, with Horst Letten and Barbara Capell.

DIE SIEBEN MANNER DER SUMARU (The Seven Secrets of Su-Maru), Spain-Germany, 1969, directed by Jess Franco, with Shirley Eaton, George Sanders and Walter Rilla.

IM SCHLOSS DER BLUTIGEN BEGIERDEN (The Castle of Unholy Desires), Germany, 1968, directed by Jess Franco, with Howard Vernon, Janine Reynaud and Michel Lemoine.

DER HUND VON BLACKWOOD CASTLE (The Hound of Blackwood Castle), Germany, 1968, directed by Alfred Vohrer, with Heinz Drache, Uta Levka, and Karin Ball.

L'HOMME AU CERVEAU GREFFE (Man With the Transplanted Brain), Italy-France-Germany, 1971, directed by Jacques Doniol Valcroze, with Mathieu Carriere, Michel Duchaussoy and Nicoleta Machiavelli.

GALAXIE, France, 1971, directed by Mathias R. Meregny, with Marika Green, Henri Serre, Jean Gras and Reinhardt Kollhoff.

MALPERTIUS, France, 1972, directed by Harry Kumel, with Orsen Welles, Susan Hampshire, Jean P. Cassel and Sylvie Vartan.

A. A. LERENA  
Acoyte 76, Buenos Aires, Argentina

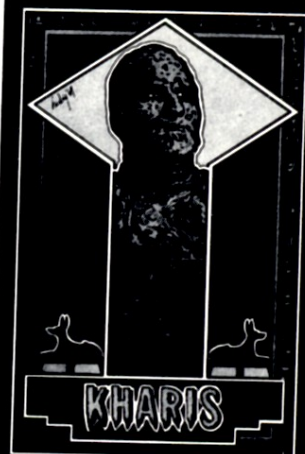
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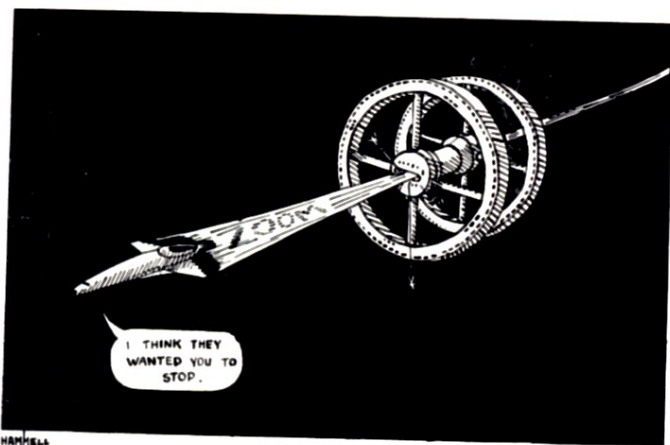
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# POSTERS



Artist David Ludwig captures the mood of an entire genre with a set of six 11"x17" art posters of actor Christopher Lee in his most famous roles, those pictured above as well as Frankenstein, Fu Manchu and Rasputin. The entire set of six posters is printed on heavy art paper and is available for only \$3.50, mailed to you flat and protected by heavy cardboard. Send to CFQ, 7470 West Diversey Ave., Elmwood Park, Illinois 60635.



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